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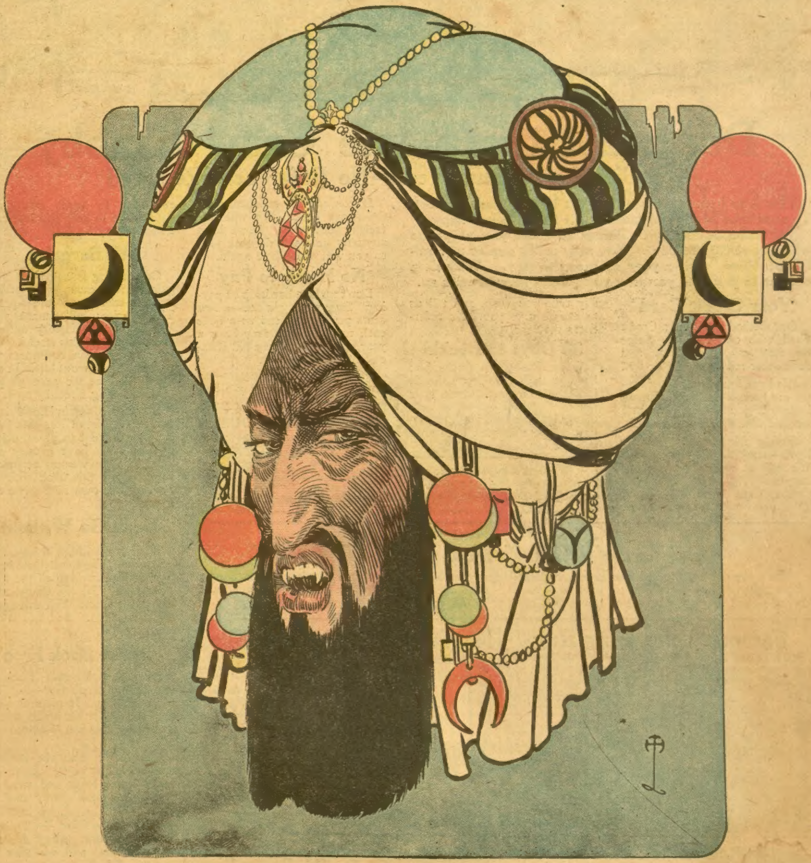


The Sword of Phiops

:-: Or, :-:

A Detective's Problem

By WILDER ANTHONY

CHAPTER I.

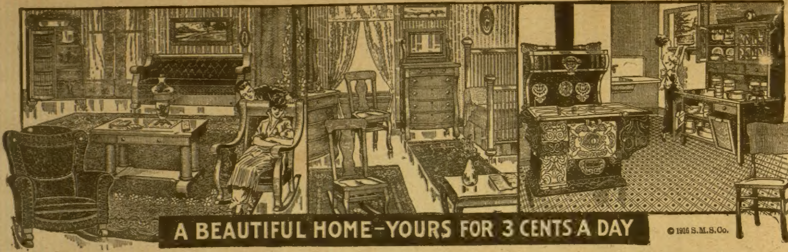
SIX feet of bone and brawn, spotless in a new uniform, freshly shaved and radiating physical fitness, Officer Patrick Maloney, of the city's "finest," strolled leisurely along Maple avenue about nine o'clock one fine Sunday morning in early June. Private residences and apartment hotels of the better class made Maloney's beat one of the best in the city, always quiet and peaceful; and the big patrolman was pacing majestically, thinking of nothing in particular, and humming a tune beneath his breath, when he turned the corner at Cottage street. He was fairly in front of Dagmar Hall—a handsome, brownstone building occupied chiefly by artists and professional men—when the wild screams of a terrified woman burst upon his ears.

Coming out of his daydreams as suddenly as tho some unseen person had pushed him into a tank of ice water, the officer swung on his heel and ran up the wide steps of the hall. He had instantly located the screams as springing from an open window on the top floor of that building, and he lost no time in idle conjecture as to their cause. Dagmar Hall, being but three stories high, had no elevator, and Maloney took the stairs two at a jump until he was nearly bowled over by the descending figure of a very hysterical charwoman, which struck him squarely amidships just as he reached a landing between the second and third floors.

"There, there, my girl!" he soothed, in his deep voice, when he had carried his struggling burden up the few remaining stairs and reached the hall, "be easy now! Maloney is here to guard you. What has frighted you so?"

The woman—she was young and not bad-looking—had calmed somewhat at first sight of the policeman, but now she found sufficient breath for a fresh out-

(Continued on page three.)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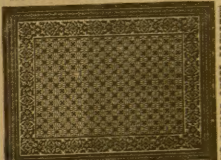

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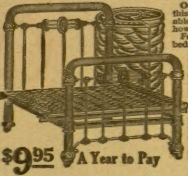

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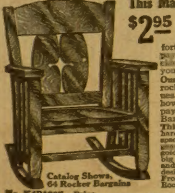

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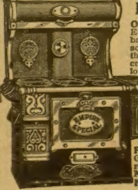

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The Sword of Phiops.

(Continued from page one.)

burst. Whatever the cause, it was plain to see that her terror was genuine. Between screams she shook so violently that her teeth literally rattled.

"In there!" she shrieked, pointing a bare arm in the direction of an open door, a few yards along the hallway. "Murder!—Mr. Ramsey—stabbed! He—I—when I came up to open the windows and dust he was there in the chair. I——"

She ended with a kind of moan, staggered, threw up one hand as tho feeling for air; then sagged into Maloney's ready arms. In spite of his big soft Irish heart, the latter sighed his relief when he saw that she had fainted. From her words he gathered that murder had been done, and if such was the case he had no time to waste on her fears. He laid her limp figure on a long bench which stood against the wall near the stair head, and directed his attention to the room with the open door.

At first, prepared tho he was for a scene of disorder, the patrolman saw nothing extraordinary in the room. It was the working-room of a scholar and student, large and almost square, with a skylight in the ceiling and very tall windows opening onto a narrow iron balcony. Except for long shelves and cases of books, several chairs, a flat desk and typewriter stand, the room seemed empty, and Maloney was on his way to an open door at its farther side when he stopped abruptly and his eyes focused on a great lounging chair which had been drawn up in front of the covered fireplace.

"Ah!" he breathed, and then stared dumbly at the thing that the back of the chair had concealed from his gaze until that moment.

He was gazing at the motionless body of a man, an old man, who sat slumped down in the big chair as tho asleep, altho Maloney knew instinctively, even before his eyes fastened on a great splotch of blood near the heart, that he was dead. He had evidently been struck down while in the act of reading, for a thick, leather-bound book lay open across his knees and a pair of spectacles was perched on his nose. One arm, bared to the elbow, lay on top of the book, while the other was hidden beneath the loose folds of his dark gray dressing gown.

For several seconds, in a kind of horrible fascination, Maloney gazed down upon the huddled, bloodstained figure, completely oblivious to his whereabouts. Then, coming to himself with a start, he remembered his duty and darted to the telephone on the desk. Three minutes later he had reported his ghastly discovery to his captain.

By this time a number of curious persons, aroused by the charwoman's screams, had crowded around the open door. Owing to the presence of Maloney's bulk directly in the doorway, they could not enter the room; but they stood craning their necks and whispering among themselves in the morbid curiosity of people who have chanced upon something terrible and mysterious. One of their number, who had come from a room almost directly across the hall, was a doctor, and, after a glance, he told Maloney that the man in the chair was beyond aid, then busied himself with the unconscious charwoman.

Soon the bang and clatter of a patrol automobile broke the Sunday calm of the neighborhood. Half a dozen men leaped out and dashed into the hall. They were led by Inspector Morton of police headquarters, who, as soon as he had sized up the situation, ordered the building cleared of everybody except those who had business there.

"Coroner Davids and the commissioner will be here right away," he said, "and we must leave everything just as it is. I've 'phoned for Wolfert, and we must give him every chance there is. This looks like a nasty case."

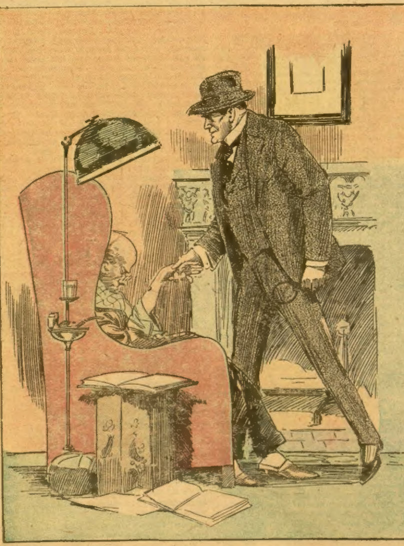
"He'll solve it, tho," Maloney volunteered. "I've seen Adam Wolfert work before and, believe me, sir, he's a wonder."

The inspector nodded, but said nothing. He merely champed nervously at the unlighted cigar in the corner of his mouth, while his keen eyes took in the appearance and location of every article in the room as tho he would force the details of the tragedy from the furniture itself. With the exception of the desk everything in the study seemed to be in perfect order. Nothing was missing—no signs of a struggle. The desk, however, was different. Its drawers were all standing wide open, and their contents were strewn about on the carpet as tho some one had ransacked them hurriedly; and Inspector Morton wondered mightily what the thing could be which had caused the murder of a comparatively poor and entirely harmless, tho learned, man like Allan Ramsey.

Less than half an hour after the arrival of the police, Coroner Davids, Detective Wolfert, and Commissioner Masterson forced their way thru the crowd which had gathered in front of the building and hurried upstairs. That is, the coroner and the commissioner hurried; Adam Wolfert did not. He never did, in fact, so far as any one knew, at least, altho he had an uncanny habit of always being a little ahead of anybody else when it came to important discoveries. Just now, having the stairs and halls to himself, he ascended slowly, his keen eyes missing no detail of his surroundings.

Halfway up the second flight he stopped and scrutinized a mark in the dust on one side of the red carpet that ran up the middle of the stairway. For a considerable interval he eyed the mark in an odd, speculative way, then he shook his head and went on. By the time he reached the scene of the tragedy the coroner was almost thru with his preliminary examination.

Without speaking to any one, Adam Wolfert wandered quietly about the room, his hands clasped behind his back and his shoulders slightly bowed, while his eyes darted about him, bright and keen as those of a bird. He was a tall, lean man, dressed in a wrinkled gray suit and a soft felt hat, so commonplace-looking in every sense that a stranger would never have looked at him twice, altho the initiated knew that his dingy exterior concealed a brain which was without a peer in the scientific detection of crime. When he had finished a superficial examination of the body and its immediate surroundings, the detective lifted an eye to the skylight above; then he wandered into the bedroom.



"What do you make of that, Morton?"

Here he peered keenly about, opening drawers and poking inquisitively into everything in the room. A sheet of paper, bearing some words and a few figures in a large irregular hand, lay on a dressing table; this he placed in his pocketbook. After a glance into the little bathroom he returned to his companions.

Commissioner Masterson, who had been impatiently awaiting his chance, drew him into a corner.

"What do you make of it, Wolfert?" he asked, in an undertone. "Pretty unusual, eh? No motive at all that I can see, and nobody knows a —— thing. Maloney was attracted by the girl's screams when she found the body and that's the first any one knew of it. Doctor Powell was in his office almost directly across the hall with the door wide open until midnight, and he didn't see or hear a soul go in or out of here. Ramsey was at work, the doctor thinks; but that's all.

"The thing was done some time around midnight—the doctors are sure of that. But what was the motive? Professor Ramsey was about as harmless an old fellow as the city holds, and he owned no valuables to speak of, altho his desk seems to have been searched for some purpose or other. Have you struck any sort of clew?"

"Nothing much," Wolfert answered, with a faint smile at the other man's impetuosity. "It's a trifle early in the game for that, commissioner; but for a guess I should say that the murderers entered the room by the skylight and left it by the door. I want to make a careful examination of the premises just as soon as you can get rid of every one except Morton."

"So you think there was more than one in it, eh?" the commissioner remarked, with a shrewd look. "Well, I'll say no more now. We'll get rid of these others presently; in the meantime you can question Doctor Powell."

Some few minutes later, after a little skillful maneuvering on the part of the former, Adam Wolfert and Doctor Powell were seated in the latter's office with the door closed. The physician, a pleasant, clear-eyed young fellow of 30, was glad to discuss what little he knew of the crime.

"Old Ramsey was rather a queer stick," he volunteered. "A genius, you know; but odd—very odd. He kept almost entirely to himself, had no friends in the building and seldom went out of it. For a number of months he's been working night and day—hardly took time to eat. I remonstrated with him once not so very long ago, but he only smiled at me in his fatherly way. He was all wrapped up in that book—it meant more than life to him. Too bad he had to die just as it was nearly finished."

"It was, indeed," Wolfert agreed. "He was writing a book, then? What kind of a book—do you know?"

"Not exactly," Powell admitted, "altho I think it was some sort of treatise on Asiatic laws and customs. Ramsey was a great authority in such matters and he had spent more than half his life in the Orient."

"I see." Adam Wolfert seemed to consider this for a moment; then he abruptly took a new tack.

"Just about what time do you think the murder was committed?" he asked. "The coroner seems positive that it took place about midnight. Do you agree with him?"

"I do. Rigor mortis had already reached its most advanced stage when the body was found, and I should say that death occurred between twelve and two o'clock, altho it is hard to state the exact hour. I sat here in this room with the hall door wide open until a quarter past twelve, and I heard or saw nothing unusual. Professor Ramsey's transom was open, too. It was a very close evening, you know."

"You are quite sure, doctor, that the dead man had no visitors during the evening?"

"Yes, almost positive; altho some one might have come up after I retired. The Hall is locked up at twelve o'clock, however, and a stranger would find it hard to get in, I should think."

A few minutes later Adam Wolfert returned to the scene of the crime and listened silently while Doctor Davids questioned Officer Maloney and the charwoman, who had by this time recovered sufficiently to tell a fairly coherent story. She could, however, shed very little light on the mystery.

"I came up," she said, "to sweep and dust as I have done every morning for the past six months. I always came at nine o'clock so as to get my work done while Professor Ramsey was out to breakfast. His door was locked as usual, and I opened it with my key and went straight across the room to the windows. I had opened one of these and turned to pick up my broom, when my eyes fell upon the poor old gentleman there in his chair. About the next thing I really remember was when the policeman came, sir."

She looked toward Maloney, who stood at one side watching her.

"You had not entered the bedroom at all, had you?" the coroner asked.

"No, sir."

Coroner Davids dismissed the witness and jotted down some notes in a little book. The girl's testimony had established one fact that might or might not be important. Professor Ramsey's bed had not been slept in on the previous night.

When the room had been cleared of all except Masterson, Inspector Morton and himself, and Maloney had been stationed in the hall outside the door to see that no one disturbed them, Adam Wolfert began his work in real earnest. While his two companions watched him curiously, he placed a chair beneath the skylight, mounted it, and drew himself up by the arms onto the flat roof. Here he moved about swiftly, peered down into the back yard of the Hall for an instant, and then carefully examined a portion of the roof's surface thru his magnifying glass. At last he dropped back into the room again and without saying a word to any one began a careful examination of the body.

Coroner Davids had already emptied the dead man's pockets of the few commonplace articles they contained, and the detective wasted no time on them, but confined his attention to the wound and a curious kind of burn on the naked right forearm which was still bent across the open book. The wound, which must have penetrated the exact center of the heart, had been made with a long, thin-bladed knife, and from the way it sloped Wolfert judged that it had been struck by some one reaching over from behind as the professor sat reading. So far all was plain enough, but when he held his lens over the mark on the arm the detective pursed his lips thoughtfully.

About two inches below the elbow on the outer side of the forearm this mark seemed to have been burned or branded there with a hot iron. It was about the size of a silver dollar, swollen slightly and a dark purple in color; but it was when he scrutinized it thru the powerful glass that Wolfert became most interested, for it was then that the brand took the almost perfect shape of a crescent. For several minutes and from every possible angle Wolfert studied it; at last he straightened up and looked at Inspector Morton.

"What do you make of that, Morton?" he asked quietly, altho there was an odd, grim look about his eyes and lips. "Ever see anything like it before?"

"Can't say that I ever did," the inspector admitted, after he had eyed the brand for an instant thru the detective's glass. "You think it has some connection with the murder?"

Wolfert nodded grimly. "I might almost say that I am positive of it," he replied. "I've seen that mark, 'The Sign of the Crescent' they call it, I believe, and if it means what I believe it means we have our work cut out for us. Professor Ramsey was killed by no ordinary criminal, gentlemen."

"You know the murderer, then—you think?" Commissioner Masterson leaned forward excitedly as he shot out the question, while Inspector Morton, in the act of lighting a cigar, looked up quickly, his strong, rugged face keen with interest.

Wolfert, whose restless spirit seldom granted him repose and just now seemed even more in evidence than usual, paused in his aimless pacing about the room and looked at his companions. His long, lean body, sharp nose and penetrating eyes gave him the look of a hound stubbornly casting around for a trail always just beyond his reach. For an instant he stared at the two men as tho deliberating something, then he shrugged his shoulders and sat down suddenly. Taking a battered briar pipe from his pocket, he filled and lighted it in methodical silence.

"In the sense you mean, commissioner," he said slowly, at length, between great puffs of yellow-white smoke, "I know nothing; I merely guess. I have a clew or two, if you like; but they're vague—mighty vague, and may lead me nowhere. The man we are after, if my conjectures are correct, is skillful—devilish skillful; far cleverer in most things than any of us, and he's not the one to leave a trail. Do you remember the Dawson murder?"

Inspector Morton nodded. He was used to Wolfert's methods, and irrelevant as the question seemed to him he did not interrupt by commenting upon it.

"That was the first," the detective continued, "the first, that is, that I have any knowledge of. Since then there have been five, all within the past two years, all apparently inexplicable—no one has ever been apprehended for any of the murders except in one instance, and he was merely a tool—and yet the general modus operandi has been almost identical in them all. In each case the victim has been a man prominent in one particular line of work. Doesn't that strike you as odd?"

Inspector Morton puffed slowly at his cigar, while Masterson kept his eyes fastened on Wolfert's face. At the moment neither man had an idea of what their companion was driving at.

"You refer to the Dawson and Leland murders, I presume?" Morton finally hazarded. "Those are the only unexplained mysteries that have happened hereabouts for a good many months; but I can't see what connection they have with this present affair."

"You will soon, however," Wolfert declared, tamping his pipe bowl with his thumb. "As it happened, I was directly connected with the investigation of both the crimes you have just named, and I discovered something very peculiar in each which has turned up again this morning. It's that burned-in crescent we have just been looking at. The same identical brand was on those other bodies."

"Which means that the murderer was the same in each instance," Commissioner Masterson exploded. "Why haven't you told me all this before, Wolfert? If you know as much as you seem to, we should get this human devil behind bars before he does any more harm."

"True enough," Adam Wolfert admitted, "but we must not jump at conclusions. Remember that as yet I have not a scrap of real evidence against the man, altho I am morally certain of all and more than I have told you. We must corner him before we can arrest him, commissioner, and in the meantime no one must know what we suspect. Remember that, for it is of the utmost importance. Our sole chance lies in trapping him before he is aware that we are on his trail. If he should guess that we were after him our lives would not be worth that!" He snapped his long fingers significantly and leaned back in his chair.

"But you know who he is!" Morton broke out eagerly, when the detective paused. "Since you know who he is the rest should be fairly easy, Wolfert."

"I only wish it were. Morton. On the contrary, we have the task of our lives ahead of us. For many months I've been working secretly gathering information from every possible source, and now that the time has come for action I find my knowledge pitifully inadequate. The man is a genius, Morton! Sitting like a foul spider in the center of a monstrous web—a web with Heaven alone knows how many threads and tendrils and which he shifts from point to point as occasion demands—he seldom shows himself. He plans merely, while his followers do the actual work, altho lately I have reason to think that he has been acting in person. I believe he was in this room last night."

"How do you deduce that?" Inspector Morton, tho visibly impressed by the detective's words, still seemed a little incredulous. "If it is his custom to perpetrate his crimes thru the medium of some hireling, why should he break the rule in this instance? And, after all, who is the fellow?"

Adam Wolfert did not reply immediately. He seemed to be thinking. Pipe in mouth, he sat hunched in his chair and stared absently at the floor, his face grim and stern in the morning sunlight. Masterson and the inspector had time to exchange a long searching look before he raised his eyes.

"His name," the detective slowly and impressively began, "is Dr. Kara Kotchana, a name which probably tells you no more than it would have told me some months ago. For your further information, however, I will add that he is the son of a Turkish merchant and a Circassian slave girl. Of uncertain age, he is a graduate of two of the world's greatest universities, and he is steeped to the finger-tips in the lore and occult science of the Orient. As a toxicologist he is probably without a peer on earth, and as a criminal he is a genius.

"He is, or pretends to be, a devotee of the goddess Kali, and he numbers a host of Thugs in his following. I think that he must be insane; but if so his insanity is of a terribly cunning sort which defies analysis. His intellect is abnormal, his wealth is almost limitless, and the combination is being used toward a single end—the subjugation of Christianity and the ultimate supremacy of Mohammedanism. Hence this murder of Professor Ramsey and those others that came before. Each victim was a recognized authority on the so-called 'Yellow Peril.'"

"Great heavens, Wolfert!" Commissioner Masterson sat up excitedly. "The thing is enormous—incredible! One man against the civilized world! I know you're not the kind to jump at conclusions; but do you realize what you've told us?"

"I do, fully, commissioner, and some day I hope to prove even more than I have said. Just now, as I've already explained, my theories are partly the result of conjecture, altho I have weighed everything very carefully. One thing I think I can prove to you beyond a doubt—Kotchana's presence in this room last night."

Getting to his feet, Wolfert went to the littered desk and picked up several sheets of paper from among those which were strewn over it, arranging them side by side in a cleared space. Then, while his companions watched him intently, he gathered a quantity of soot from the bricks of the fireplace and sprinkled it over the clean surface of each sheet. When he had blown the soot off the papers he smiled delightedly.

"Kotchana's finger-prints are very distinctive," he remarked, handing one of the sheets, upon which a number of odd markings had appeared, to the commissioner. "I was able to obtain a good impression of his thumb some months ago, and I have studied it since until I would know it among a thousand. Some of those other imprints belong to Professor Ramsey, I presume, and they are of no importance. Kotchana visited this room personally because he could not intrust such delicate work to one of his Thugs. He searched this desk for the manuscript of the book that his victim had so nearly finished—it contained too much truth about certain Oriental ambitions for Kotchana to permit its publication."

"So that was the motive, eh? Good God, what a ghastly business!" Masterson sank back in his chair and stared at the detective, while Inspector Morton bent over the finger-marked paper and studied it closely.

"The worst feature of it all is," Wolfert went on, after a short silence, "that we don't know exactly where to look for Kotchana or where he will strike next. I have composed a list of names—Professor Ramsey's was one of them—of persons whom he is apt to attack, but there is no telling which will be the next victim. Of course, we can warn them all to be on their guard, but it's hardly worth while. I had already warned Ramsey, and yet you see what happened."

It was late the next night when Adam Wolfert retired to the little room he called home and threw himself into a chair. It was almost the first time he had paused for rest since he left Dagmar Hall, the previous morning, and his tired body was crying loudly for both sleep and food. His first move after leaving his companions that Sunday morning had been to send messages of warning to those whom he believed Kotchana had especial reason to hate, after which he and Inspector Morton had started the machinery of the law in a systematic search for the Turk's hiding-place. Until they could find the place where he lived and issued his orders to his murderous followers, they could do nothing toward effecting his capture, and since Kotchana might at any moment commit another of his horrible crimes, speed was of the greatest importance.

Puffing slowly on the battered pipe which was his almost constant companion, the detective pondered over his day's work. As usual, he had not divulged all that he knew. His one failing was a strong love of the dramatic, and it was his weakness to keep certain important clews to himself until the very last moment. Just now he was puzzling over the scrap of paper he had picked up in Professor Ramsey's bedroom. It was apparently a page torn from a notebook, and it was crumpled and discolored as tho from being carried in the pocket. It bore the name and address of a man living in the lower end of the city, but what puzzled Wolfert was that it had undoubtedly been handled by Kotchana himself, and he was trying to decide whether the Turk had dropped the paper out of his pocket or whether he had merely happened to finger it while searching for the pages of Ramsey's manuscript. If the bit of paper was Kotchana's property, the address on it might prove to be of some value in locating him. Wolfert was just deciding to investigate the address on the next day, when all thought of it was driven from his mind by a soft rap at the door.

For a second or two the detective stared in the direction of the sound as tho wondering if he had heard aright. He seldom received callers at his room, and the hour was now so late that a chance visit from some stranger seemed out of the question. When the knock was repeated, however, this time a little louder, he came to himself.

"Come in," he called out, in a quiet tone.

There was an instant's quiet as tho the midnight visitor was of two minds whether to enter or not, then the door slowly moved inward and a cloaked and hooded figure stepped into the room. The next second Adam Wolfert was on his feet, staring in surprise.

The visitor was a woman! A young woman, dark-haired and starry-eyed, with rosy cheeks and half-parted lips, showing teeth like polished pearls. For a little the detective returned her frightened stare like a man in a dream; then he pulled himself together.

"Come in," he invited. "You wished to see me?" He stepped forward with the intention of bringing up a chair, but the girl raised one small hand in protest.

"No, no!" she exclaimed, in a pretty foreign accent, which reminded Wolfert of a gurgling brook. "No, no, I have not the time, sir. You are Monsieur Wolfert—yes? They told me at the police I should find you here."

Wolfert nodded reassuringly. He could see that the girl was scared out of her wits for some cause or other that he could not understand and he wished to put her at her ease. He glanced toward the chair again.

The visitor, however, shook her pretty head stubbornly.

"No, no," she repeated, "there is no time. Even now I should return. He—the master—knows everything. Tomorrow night he will kill the Captain Denton, and after him all of you who would oppose him. I, Zari, the slave-girl, have come to warn you to fly while there is still time; but I must go before he returns." With a last swift look of passionate appeal out of her beautiful dark eyes the girl backed away and vanished in the darkness of the hall.

For an instant Adam Wolfert stood still, staring in half-dazed silence at the door she had closed behind her, then he sprang forward and dashed into the hall just in time to hear the street door close softly. For a second or two he paused at the top of the stairs, deliberating if he should follow his visitor; but he finally shook his head and went slowly back into his room. Much as he wanted to question this strange apparition out of the night, he decided that it would be futile to try to do so at that moment. Already his mind was busy turning over the thoughts which the slave-girl's few words of warning had brought into it.

Captain Howard Denton, big game hunter and explorer of note, had only recently returned from a five-year study in the heart of Asia, and his name was one of those on the detective's list of Kotchana's prospective victims. He must be warned instantly of the impending attack, and steps must be taken to trap Kotchana. Wolfert lost no time in wondering why Zari had seen fit to warn him.

The fact that she had done so was sufficient, and he was only too glad to have an ally in the enemy's confidence.

This mysterious story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

THE DULL ROAD.

It's the dull road that leads to the gay road,
The practice that leads to success;
The work road that leads to the play road,
It is trouble that breeds happiness.

It's the hard work and merciless grinding
That purchases glory and fame;
It's repeatedly doing, nor minding
The drudgery drear of the game.

It's the passing up glamour or pleasure
For the sake of the skill we may gain,
And in giving up comfort or leisure
For the joy that we hope to attain.

It's the hard road of trying and learning,
Of toiling, uncheered and alone,
That wins us the prizes worth earning,
And leads us to goals we would own.

* * *

THE GIRL'S VISIT.

"Hello there, old man," said Uncle Frank.

Young Frank, who was seated on the edge of old Billy's box stall, ceased his execution of the dreary, dirgelike tune that he had been whistling and said, "Hello there, yourself," in response to his uncle's cheerful greeting.

Uncle Frank entered the combination garage and stable and seated himself on the step of the automobile directly outside the door of Billy's stall.

"Well," he said, "how goes it? Isn't the world treating you according to specifications?"

Frank gloomed down at his uncle from his elevation. "Naw," he said. "We're going to have company."

Uncle Frank tactfully suppressed a smile.

"Well," he said, "it might be worse, mightn't it?"

"Worse?" repeated his nephew indignantly. "I'd like to know how. It's a girl—or at least part of it is."

"That's bad," conceded Uncle Frank. "But she won't bother you much, will she? She'll be playing with her dolls and things. She won't want to be doing boys' stunts."

"Maybe not," said Frank, a note of hope in his voice. "But mother says I've got to see that she has a good time and this is the football season."

"Pretty tough," agreed Uncle Frank. "But maybe she won't stay very long."

"Oh, maybe not," snorted Frank, sarcastically. "But you'd think two weeks was pretty long if you had to have her at your house."

"I don't doubt it." Uncle Frank was one of those people who could grow just as indignant over your troubles as he could about his own. "When are they coming?"

"They're in there now," Frank growled. "That's why I came out here."

"Putting off the evil hour?" inquired Uncle Frank.

"I guess so," conceded his nephew. "I did think I'd go over and play with Tom this afternoon, but I was afraid if I did mother'd go up in the air. Aw, darn the old girls, anyway, I hate 'em."

"They are a nuisance," admitted Uncle Frank, agreeably. "But the world's so full of 'em. Under the circumstances don't you think you might as well go in with me and get the preliminaries over?"

Frank slid down slowly and reluctantly from his seat on the side of the stall. "Well, I don't know. I suppose so," he said. "Say, Uncle Frank, have I got dust on my back? Just take your handkerchief and brush me off a little, won't you? And, say, Uncle Frank, do you like my hair pompadour like this, or do you think it looks better parted the way I used to wear it? Maybe I'd better sneak into the house and get on my blue suit. Oh, say, I bet that's her coming out of the back door now. Say, Uncle Frank, are my shoes polished well enough? I think I'll sneak into the house and get on my other clothes. Oh, say, I ain't going to stay here."

He started toward the rear entrance of the stable, but the visitor was already upon them. She had darted down the garden walk and dashed into the stable before Frank could make his escape. She flew around the stable like a small whirlwind.

"Gee! Look at the horse!" she cried, putting one foot up in a knothole and lightly rising to the level of old Billy's head. As lightly as she had risen she dropped to the floor and dashed over to the automobile.

"Gee!" she cried. "An automobile! I bet I could run it as easy as pie. Get out of the way and let me look."

With one thrust of her small, muscular arm she sent Frank reeling against the wall. She leaped into the machine and inspected it inside and out while Frank looked on with a dazed, sheepish look of admiration.

Presently she caught sight of Frank's well-beloved dog, Joblots, outside.

'Gee!" she shouted. "Look at the dog! I'm going to look at the dog."

Frank gazed after her for a moment. Then he turned to his uncle. "I think I'd better go with her," he said. "I don't know but maybe old Joblots might bite her."

Several weeks later Uncle Frank once more found his nephew seated disconsolately on old Billy's stall.

"Well," he said. "I hear the company's gone. I suppose you're tickled to death."

Young Frank rested his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands. "Guess so," he said, gruffly.

"Well," said Uncle Frank. "I don't blame you for being glad to get rid of her. She struck me as being a good deal of a tomboy."

"Tomboy!" cried Frank, indignantly. "Well, I guess——" Then his eyes met the merry eyes of his uncle and he wriggled and grinned. "Well, anyway," he concluded, "what's the difference? I like 'em kind of rough."

* * *

Advice to Husbands.

Get all the dishes on the table at once. It annoys a woman to have her husband hop up and down while she is eating.

Do not scold if your wife drips the egg on the clean tablecloth as she serves, but tactfully present her at Christmas with some implement better suited to the purpose than a young pitchfork.

Flavor the morning meal with a bright smile.

If your wife forgets to kiss you as she hurries off to her day's toil, do not throw yourself down in the smoking-room for a good cry.

Skullcaps are becoming only to long curly hair and short curly noses. Unless you are of the ringlet or retrousse type, never allow your wife to see you in this headgear. Even then it savors of disordered locks, and you should never appear at breakfast until you have arranged your coiffure.

Do not spare the tongs, for stringy hair detracts from any man's appearance.

Do not come to the table in a dressing gown. Negligee garments are unsanitary, as they are prone to get in the food. You can easily make some trim morning suits of wash materials.

Do not neglect the little touches that make a house a home, touches that only a man can give. A cluster of pipes on the mantel, a pillow cover of tobacco labels, a jar plastered with cigar wrappers, a pair of cuffs leaning on the table in an attitude of careless grace—these give a homelike air.

A woman likes her husband to be accomplished. Do not drop your music just because you are married. Cultivate the graces, that your wife may show you to her friends with pride, which is said to be a large element in love.

Dress each night for dinner. You will feel fresher and your wife will think more of you for it. As it would be extravagant to cook in an evening suit and as the dinner would spoil if allowed to stand, slide deftly into your coat as you place the food on the table.

Greet your wife lovingly at night, but do not demand a response. Never ask her if she still loves you. Nothing tires a woman more than this.

Serpent and Dove

Or, The Heiress of Hedstone Hall

By T. C. Harbaugh

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CHAPTER V.

MONA'S ADVENTURE.

THE unexpected confrontation of Nicholas Burke by Mona, the blind girl, for a moment shattered the nerves of that accomplished schemer. Where he had expected to meet Lucille he had encountered her companion, and for a few moments he stood in the moonshine and stared at the sightless beauty.

"You are Doctor Burke, I know!" exclaimed Mona. "Why have you come to Hedstone Hall?"

The man's ire flashed out in his words.

"What business is it of yours, my lady?" he cried. "Thank fortune, you are not my keeper," and then, fearing that he had committed a blunder, he hastened to repair the damage.

"I have been summoned professionally to the Hall. Think you I would have come of my own initiative?"

"Satan was not invited to the Garden of Eden," and a haughty smile wreathed the ruby lips upon which the last word trembled.

"Then good night," responded Doctor Burke, again beating down his choler. "Methinks you are not the gentle lamb you are said to be," and with this he turned abruptly on his heel and stalked away.

Mona, after entering the Hall, went direct to Lucille's apartment. Her lost sense seemed to incommode her but little. She found the knob and gently opened the door.

"Lucille?"

The heiress of Hedstone Hall rose and took Mona's hand, leading her to a seat which she occupied beside her.

"You are trembling, girl?" said she.

"And who, pray, has a better right to tremble than Mona? I have been touched by a serpent."

"In the woods?"

"Near the pergola. He thought I was you."

"Was it the demon doctor?"

"It was none other," and Mona rubbed her wrist as if she would obliterate the contamination of the contact.

"He was abroad tonight for some evil purpose," Mona went on. "There are dark schemes afoot, Lucille."

"I doubt it not," and then she recalled her meeting with Noah, the young boatman, and wondered if this Northern man had overheard them near the stream.

"Now I shall speak," continued the blind girl. "It is a story which I have kept back for days. A week ago I had a strange dream which rudely disturbed my sleep. Hoping to overcome the fear it inspired, I arose and went below. The house was still. At the foot of the stair I stopped and stood silent for a long time. Presently I heard the library door open, and I drew back guiltily.

"There is, you know, a dark corner—it must be dark, when the door is open—and I ensconced myself in it. Some one came out of the library. I distinctly heard the light footfall, for tho I see not, my sense of hearing is wonderfully acute. The person who emerged from the room paused on the threshold. I heard his labored breathing, and I could have touched him with my outstretched hand. It seemed to me that he was looking back into the library. All at once I heard him speak. 'I guess that will do the work,' said he. 'If it does not I will have another trial,' and then he moved toward the front door, and I heard the patter of his feet on the porch.

"My heart was all aflutter over this strange incident. I was without nerves. I felt my cheeks grow cold. If the man had seen me—but how could he, when I was hidden by the open door? His singular words struck a chill to my soul. I knew the voice. There is but one like it in all this world."

Lucille was watching the face beside her. The hand which had touched Mona's was gently withdrawn. She wanted a continuation of the narrative, but she was afraid to ask for it. A gripping horror filled her bosom.

"Must I go on?" asked the blind girl. "Do you want me to go to the end of my story?"

"Why not?" whispered Lucille. "A story is not good unless it has a fitting finale."

Mona took a long breath.

"Why did the man in the hall utter those strange words?" she suddenly resumed. "What did they mean with the master ill and the hour near midnight?"

"How do I know?" cried Lucille. "You say you recognized the voice?"

"I knew it as well as I know my own. It was Hasketh Seaforth who uttered the startling words."

Lucille recoiled with a little cry. What terrible evidence was all this? Was it a confirmation of her uncle's charge against the fugitive lover? Had he visited the Hall at dead of night to carry out the dark purposes of a heart of sin? Was he really sapping a human life with poison, trying to win her by an assassin's weapons? It could not be, and yet why his startling language?

"You are sure, Mona?" breathed Lucille, with stiffening lips.

"I could not be mistaken," was the firm reply. "That man was surely Hasketh Seaforth."

The bubble of love and trust seemed on the eve of bursting. The flower of affection was drooping on the stem that had cherished it. The distraught girl knew that her face was ashen, and thanked God that Mona could not see.

"Is that all?" she asked feverishly.

"It is all."

"You say it was near midnight?"

"So near," answered Mona, "that I heard the clock strike twelve a few moments later."

"You went back to bed then?"

"No, I slipped into the library."

"For what?"

"I can hardly say. The room had the stillness of death. The good master spends the night in his chair, you know. I felt that he was there, else why had Hasketh Seaforth spoken as I had heard? Feeling that the master was asleep, I tiptoed to the table and felt with my hands. I touched his arm. He was sleeping. Next I ran my hand gently over the cloth, and it came in contact with his night glass. All the time the man's words were ringing in my ears: 'I guess that will do the work. If not I will have another trial!' I picked up the night glass and, turning halfway round, emptied it on the rug at the master's feet. I believed he had not drank. Fearing to remain longer in the room lest he should awake and discover me, I crept upstairs and went to bed."

The silence that followed the girl's last words seemed palpable. There came in at the window the soft whisperings of the magnolias outside.

"I shall go now," said Mona. "You will kiss me good night, Lucille?"

The heiress of the Hall leaned forward and touched the pallid brow with her parted lips, but there was a horror in her eyes and a mad hand seemed gripping her heartstrings.

Mona rose slowly and glided away. Lucille centered her with her gaze till the door closed behind her.

"God pity me!" wailed from the depths of her tortured soul. "Why did he come like a thief in the night? Why did he speak the words which Mona caught? Is it true? Did he come with murder in his heart? And why is he not here to meet the terrible accusations?"

She rose all a-tremble. The room seemed to spin round her. There was a coldness at her heart that threatened to turn her whole frame to ice. She went to the window and jerked the curtains aside. The moon was illumining the ground which lay beyond the mansion, showing her the walk which led to the little stream.

Suddenly there came up the walk a figure which halted in front of the house. Lucille drew the curtains a trifle and watched the object. It was a smallish figure, and while she regarded it with breathless interest it dodged into the shadow of a tree, and a moment later a birdcall cut the air.

The signal startled the lone watcher. She could barely make out the outlines of the man under the tree, but she felt that some one would emerge from the Hall. Sure enough, she heard the opening of a lower door. There was the sound of footsteps on the veranda, and then she saw a man glide toward the other one.

"Merciful Heavens!" leaped from Lucille's lips. "It's Dan!"

The trusted servant of the Hall had come out in answer to the nocturnal signal, and Lucille, with her nails cutting thru the pinkness of her palms, heard the fluttering of her woman's heart. Was Dan in the conspiracy? Was this man who had been trusted by her thru long years of childhood and girlhood a traitor?

As she looked she saw him join the man at the tree. The two figures seemed to melt into one. She would have given years of life to have heard what they were saying in the shadows. She thought of raising the window for that purpose, but fearing that the slightest noise might betray her and flush the game, she desisted.

Moments seemed like hours to the quivering girl. At last Dan came back to the house. Lucille sprang to her mahogany writing desk and jerked open a little drawer. With a revolver in her white hand she turned toward the hall. In another second she was bounding toward the head of the stair.

When she was halfway down, the front door opened, and Dan's figure appeared on the threshold.

"Not now!" thought Lucille, suddenly, "I will confront this Judas some other time," and, hugging the somber wall, she saw the servant glide down the corridor and vanish toward his own part of the Hall.

CHAPTER VI.

DARTS THAT PIERCE.

THE wife of Nicholas Burke! The thought aroused in Lucille every vestige of indignation. Was it possible that the master of Hedstone Hall would go thus far? Under what influence had he fallen that, in order to pay the plotter for his skill, he would sacrifice her happiness? Who had suggested the infamous intrigue?

The girl felt that she was waging a losing battle against fate, that in the end she must capitulate and become the bride of this son of dishonor. The patent infamy of Dan seemed a new millstone about her neck, the flight of Hasketh was yet another weight of grief, and Mona's story added further gloom to the sky.

The morning after its narration Lucille mounted her favorite horse and set out for a gallop across country. She wanted to be where she could breathe the uncontaminated air and think. She longed to pull herself together and take counsel with her inmost soul.

It was a morning when all nature was awake. The early songsters were fill-

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ing the air with music, and the brooks seemed to have stolen from nature a new lay. The flowers leaned to her as she rode down the road, and now and then a hare, disturbed for a moment, sped off into the adjacent copse.

For a while, at least, she would be shut of Doctor Burke. True, she had not seen him since the night before, but she doubted not that he was closeted with his patient, riveting the bonds which he had fashioned for her.

A mile from the Hall was a little spring of the clearest water in all the region. Dan, at her request, had fashioned a rustic seat there, and more than once she had repaired thither with book and passed delightful hours. She headed in this direction, and soon drew rein at the coveted spot.

The bubbling of the water wooed her. An old-fashioned calabash swung from a bough over the spring, and Lucille took it down and dipped it into the translucent depths.

"Would Venus give a satyr a draught?"

Lucille started as if a serpent had hissed his warning behind her. The calabash almost fell from her hands, for she was staring into the face of Nicholas Burke. He had alighted from a roan from the stables of the Hall and was feasting his eyes upon her.

Lucille's first impulse was to accuse him of following her, but she refrained and said:

"You are welcome to your share of the water, Doctor." She refilled the vessel and handed it to him.

"Do you often take constitutionals?" he asked, looking over the rim of the calabash.

"Exercise is a hobby of mine."

"And a very healthy one," was the reply, and having drained the gourd, he replaced it on its hook and turned to her again.

"Your uncle is getting along handsomely," he remarked. "He is nearly out of the shadows."

"I shall be grateful when he no longer feels his old malady."

"I am glad to have a hand in his restoration. But," he was looking searchingly at her, "I shall be the happiest of men when I have received my fee."

A deep flush overspread the girl's temples.

"Doctor Burke," said she, and her voice seemed to change, "I have been informed of the fee you speak of."

"I thought so," was the reply. "And for the love you bear your uncle you will be willing to see the debt liquidated?"

The flush, bright a moment before, changed to pallor. Lucille seemed to increase an inch in stature; her hand closed on the slender riding whip, and her eyes looked into his as if she were searching the tablets of his soul.

"I am not willing!" came from her colorless lips. "I am not ready to become your wife."

"Then you would sooner see your uncle go back to the shadows of the Unknown while you link your fortunes with those of one who is now a fugitive from justice?"

"Hasketh Seaforth?"

"The self-confessed poisoner."

Lucille's lips curled proudly.

"On what evidence?" she demanded.

"On evidence that would convict in any court of law."

She took a step backward and laid her hand on the bridle rein of her mount.

"It is useless for us to discuss this point," she said. "Besides, it is repugnant to my sense of honor."

His eyes seemed to laugh.

"We may as well come to an understanding first as last. I have but to say, Miss Lucille, that the compact shall be carried out to the letter."

"Like a modern Shylock, you will exact your pound of flesh, you mean?"

"Every ounce of it!" he cried.

She was silent for a moment, then her eyes seemed to scintillate with unwonted fire which rendered her more beautiful than ever, and she strode toward him.

"So there is a compact?" she echoed. "So there is a bargain between you and my uncle? It was signed before you set foot on Southern soil. I ask not the name of the wretch who is your agent. Were I to demand it, no doubt your tongue would hesitate to utter it. The depths of this diabolical plot against a man's honor and a woman's soul are as yet unknown to me. There are reptiles that shun the sunlight, and wolves that do their work in the dark. Think you, Doctor Burke, that I will not fight for my happiness? Do you deceive yourself with the belief that because I love the man who has given me a home, I will sacrifice myself on the altar of avarice and become the wife of a man whom I despise?"

Every shaft went home. There was not a vestige of color in Nicholas Burke's face when the last word fell from Lucille's lips. She saw that he was pulling himself together, and watched him with bated breath.

"Those are futile words," he exclaimed, himself once more. "Not all your aversion nor your boasted fight for honor shall rob me of the fee I have demanded."

"Since you invite the combat, let it be war to the knife!" flashed in his face. "Morgan Dalray may turn me from Hedstone Hall; he may cut me off without a penny; he may add his curse to the ejectment; but while I have within me a woman's heart, I shall repudiate the infamous bargain for your pound of flesh."

She turned to mount her horse, but with the quickness of a cat he was at her side and his hand closed on her arm.

"You shall hear me thru!" he exclaimed. "By my life, my beauty, I am not to be defeated by words! You have been fairly won; I am fulfilling my part of the compact, and no power under Heaven shall prevent Morgan Dalray from keeping his oath."

"You reckon without the woman whom you would purchase for the basest ends," was the retort. "I am not the real prize of this game of yours. The stake is Hedstone Hall, with its broad acres and its thousand beauties. Tell me, Doctor Burke, tell me, if you dare, who made the hated agreement with my uncle, who sent for you, who assists you in the plot against Hasketh Seaforth, and who intercepted the letter he sent me ere he went away? If your tongue is not the instrument of lies, tell me this, Doctor Burke!"

"You are fertile in accusation," he smiled, with the grace of a modern Mephistopheles. "In your eyes I am the veriest villain on earth, and yet, Miss Lucille, when we are husband and wife you will find me the most devoted of swains."

"I shall not seek the discovery," laughed Lucille. "No, Doctor Burke, I need no escort back to the Hall. The way is quite familiar and the danger is not worth speaking of."

"But you must listen a moment longer," he insisted. "You know nothing of my family. You——"

"Genealogy is distasteful to me," broke in the imperious girl. "You may keep it for those who are willing to listen."

"By Jove! Your uncle was right. He said you had a temper, and I am now convinced of it."

"It is you who have called it forth," said Lucille. "You have made me forget myself by your words."

"Tell me ere you go what you think of the man who had fled from justice with the hand of Cain on his brow. A lordly knight of the Sunny South, is he not?"

He would have seized her arm again if she had not lifted the riding whip with a look that made him recoil.

"You would not have a scarred bridegroom at the altar?" he laughed.

"Try me and see if I would not," was the answer. "Sooner than become a party to the fulfillment of the compact, which I believe has been obtained by the basest fraud, I would go out into the world branded as a homeless outcast and feel proud of my station."

He did not laugh now. Biting his lip, he went back to his horse and threw himself into the saddle.

"The more I see of you, my Southern lady, the more you are worth winning!" he hurled into her teeth, and then, touching his mount with the tip of his whip, he galloped away, leaving the heiress of Hedstone Hall gazing after him with a strange smile on her white face.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAN ON THE STEP.

IT WAS evident as the days wore on at Hedstone Hall that Nicholas Burke was not to be driven from his purpose. Lucille saw this in every movement he made as well as in his looks. She had discovered that he was aided by Dr. Leo Dredge, whom she regarded as a fit companion for the man from the North. For not long at any time was Morgan Dalray beyond the espionage of these two men. When one was not a shadow at the Hall, the other was, and the fair object of the plot found herself getting deeper and deeper into the toils.

"The girl must not cross me!" exclaimed Dalray, as he leaned back in his chair with the open window before him. "I am on the road to recovery, and she must not think of becoming the wife of the man who, after attempting to poison me, took to flight in order to escape the penalty of his crime. His flight is confession. He dares not reappear in this region, for he knows that if he does the hounds of justice will bay at his heels."

The day was near its close. The soft shades of evening were stealing over wood and field, and the brook was caroling its twilight lay.

A figure came slowly down the road beyond the grounds and halted at a spot from which the old mansion could be discerned. The Hall lifted its shape among the trees, and the porch with its climbing vines afforded a pretty sight.

This man was not well dressed, yet there was about him an air of gentility. He swung a wood cane carelessly at his side, and whistled while he gazed thru the vista toward the Hall. He might have been 35, and his face was bronze and his eyes peculiarly piercing.

"So this is the place?" he said to himself. "Well, I'm rather glad I'm here at last."

He sauntered a little nearer Hedstone Hall and paused again. A form emerged from the house and came down the walk.

"I wonder if that is Miss Lucille?" he went on, watching the advancing figure. "Never saw her before in all my life. She carries herself well, just like the dear girl she is said to be and—Ho! she is going to collide with that tree. Is she asleep?"

The watched one suddenly turned aside and avoided the oak which she had almost reached. Presently she halted within a few feet of the man. He was all curiosity now.

"It's queer," he ejaculated. "Miss Lucille has been described to me as a person with dark hair, whereas the tresses of this beauty are golden. Who can she be?"

Blind Mona was reaching up for a magnolia blossom, and, having found it, she tore it from its stem and pressed it to her lips.

"He said nothing about a woman like that. She must have come to the Hall since he left."

In another moment Mona had passed him, going down the path that terminated at the little river, and his eyes followed her till the foliage rendered her no longer visible.

The man turned to the Hall once more, and went as far as the veranda. He sat down on the step and flicked the leaves about his feet with the tip of his cane. A door opened behind him, but he did not seem to have heard it.

"I say, sir, this is no hotel."

The stranger looked around and caught the speaker's eye.

"I didn't think it was," he replied. "Leastwise it doesn't look like one."

"This is Hedstone Hall, the home of Mr. Morgan Dalray, planter, and he desires no visitors just now."

"You are the factotum, I suppose?"

"I'm Dan, if you must know."

"Yes, Dan," echoed the strange man. "You've been here a long time, eh, Dan?"

"Mr. Dalray raised me."

"Yes, I believe I can see that."

A resentful look leaped up in Dan's eyes.

"What business have you at the Hall?" he demanded.

"No particular business, if you please, Dan. I am just strolling around."

"Eh?"

"My name is Martin Box."

"It matters little to me what your name is. We don't tolerate callers here."

"No?"

"The master is ill."

The cane ceased its performances among the leaves.

"Not seriously so?" he remarked, throwing some sympathy into his tones.

"It's too serious for the master to be bothered with callers."

Dan seemed to be debating with himself whether he should not kick the inquisitive fellow off the step.

"What seems to be the nature of your master's malady, Dan?"

"See here, you're getting too familiar." Dan moved forward, his dark face betraying his intentions. "The master's been poisoned, if you must know."

"Not that bad, and in such a model community, too!" smiled the stranger. "I didn't think you had such people here."

"We've had but the one, thank Heaven! He sloped some days ago and will doubtless keep his distance."

"Ran off, did he? Why didn't you block his game?"

"We've blocked it now," chuckled Dan, growing a little confidential. "Doctor Burke is bringing the master out of the shadows, and when he succeeds the Hall will be bright again."

"This doctor must be a wonderful man," observed the one on the step.

"He is. He came down from New York."

"Summoned down here to see the master?"

"Yes, sir."

"It'll cost something for his services, I'll bet my life. These great experts don't work for their health alone."

"Certainly not, but I must remind you that it's near time to close the Hall for the night."

"Exactly. Thank you, Dan. You were thinking of kicking me off the porch, weren't you?"

"We don't like intruders, that's a fact."

"Well, I'll not stretch your patience," Martin Box said, rising. "I perceive that my invisibility is better than my company."

"I heartily agree with you," returned Dan, sharply.

"You've got a fine place here and that girl whom I just saw go down the walk must be its heiress."

"That was Mona, the blind girl."

Mr. Box gave a little start.

"Blind? You don't tell me!" he exclaimed. "Oh, yes. I remember now that she nearly collided with a tree."

"It's a wonder, too, for she knows where everything is on the plantation."

With this Martin Box took himself off, carrying his head a trifle high and walking with a care-free, easy stride.

"What brought that fellow over here?" cried Dan, watching the vanishing figure. "He's not of these parts and——"

"Dan?"

"Yes, sir," and the servant turned sharply and trotted into the house.

Morgan Dalray was sitting bolt upright in his easy chair.

"Whom were you talking to, Dan?" he asked, as the fellow entered the library.

"A fellow who took the liberty of sitting on the steps, but whom I promptly sent about his business."

"That was right, Dan. A tramp, wasn't he?"

"Didn't look much like one," was the response. "But he's gone just the same."

Meantime Mr. Martin Box was pushing toward Ashboro, nearly two miles away. There was a look of satisfaction in his

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keen dark eyes. He was swinging his cane like a gentleman.

When he entered the little town thru which a railroad ran, he suddenly turned aside and brought up at the small depot which was ticket office, waiting-room and telegraph headquarters all in one. A young operator, smoking a foul-smelling pipe, was leaning back in a rickety chair.

"I'd like to send a telegram," said the stranger.

The slave of the pipe looked up and pushed a blank toward the speaker.

"You'll get this off tonight, I suppose?" asked the man calling himself Martin Box, when the message had been written.

"At once, sir."

The agent looked at the telegram and smiled. He couldn't just see the importance of the message, for it ran as follows:

"To Jonas Du Pont, Louisville: Pheasants plentiful here. I will stay and shoot. BOX."

When the words had been ticked off, the operator turned in his chair.

"So you're going to hunt about here?" he ventured.

"Yes, I like shooting," and bidding the young man good night, Martin Box walked out.

He smiled, for "Jonas Du Pont" was Hasketh Seaforth.

"Yes," he said half aloud, as a smile illumined his face, "I'm going to hunt, but not winged game, not by a long shot!" And he bent his steps toward the only hostelry in the town.

CHAPTER VIII.

DAN.

ENMESHED as she seemingly was by the net of fate, Lucille saw the sky darken about her. Not for three days after her encounter with Doctor Burke at the spring did she come face to face with him. She felt that he would report the interview to her uncle, and that it would bring about a confrontation which would change her whole life and cause her to forsake the spot which was dearer to her than any other on earth—Hedstone Hall. Tremblingly she waited for the knell of doom.

Dan's mysterious conduct greatly mystified her. If he was not a traitor, why had he met the little man on the lawn? Was Dan, whom she had always trusted, in league with the cabal against her?

Noah Nuff had declared that he had mailed Hasketh's last letter to her, and Lucille was equally sure that it had never reached her. If it had been taken from the postoffice by Dan, what had become of it?

Lucille resolved to confront the suspected man.

"Dan!" she called from midway on the staircase, as that person emerged from the library.

The fellow stopped and looked up into her face.

"What is it, Miss Lucille?"

There was a look of resolution in the girl's eyes, and she waited as the man came slowly up the steps to stop beside her.

"Come to my room."

"Yes, Miss Lucille," and he followed doggedly at her heels, but started as she closed the door after letting him in.

She vainly tried to read his thoughts in his expression.

"Dan," she began, when she had pulled herself together for the inquisition, "Dan, do you ever lose a letter?"

His look became a strange stare.

"Don't equivocate, Dan," Lucille went on. "I want the truth, not prevarication."

"But you must explain," said he. "You have asked me if I ever lose a letter. Your letters, Miss Lucille?"

"My letters!"

"Why should I lose them?" demanded Dan, with an air of an insulted person.

"Why, indeed? Dan, you cannot be ignorant of the game that is being played for high stakes at Hedstone Hall. I give you credit for having discernment. Your eyes are always open. I have never found you faithless. There is no reason in the world why you should join the plot to wreck not one life, but two lives."

A light seemed to break in upon the man's mind.

"Why such questions, Miss Lucille?" cried he. "Have you really missed a letter?"

"A most important one. It was placed in the postoffice not long ago, and should have reached me ere this. You bring the mail to the Hall; you must have got that letter, unless——"

She paused. She was about to say that unless Phineas Caldwell, the postmaster, was in the pay of Doctor Burke, the lost missive from Hasketh Seaforth had failed to reach her after it had been intrusted to Dan.

Lucille had already confessed to herself that Dan was guilty. His manner seemed to betray him.

"I lost no letter!" he flashed indignantly. He was going to take up the cudgel for his honor.

"You swear it, Dan?"

"On a stack of Bibles, Miss Lucille. Why have you doubted Dan?"

She hardly knew what to say.

"I've been under the roof of Hedstone Hall from my childhood. Every stone in the old house is dear to me. I love everybody who lives here. Sooner than prove treacherous I would take my own life this minute. I am no traitor, Miss Lucie!"

The girl was believing him now. Honesty shown in his eyes, and his uplifted hand emphasized his words.

"I haven't been blind all this time," he went on. "I can't help seeing things when they are right under my nose. Dan Gustin isn't as smart as some people, but he's not all ignorance."

"Then forgive me, Dan." Lucille held out her hand. "I could not help but suspect, especially after you met the little man in the gloaming."

"Did you see me meet him?"

"I did. And when you came in you saw me on the staircase?"

"I remember now," cried he. "What did you have in the hand you held behind your back?"

"A revolver, Dan."

He tried to laugh, but the attempt was a failure.

"Who was that man, Dan?"

"I can't tell you, Miss Lucie, at least not now. Let me keep my little secret."

She was undecided for a moment.

"Keep it," said she, at length. "You know what they say about Hasketh?"

"I have heard it all."

"About the terrible charge of attempted murder?"

"Yes."

"And what do you say to that?"

"I don't want to believe it, Miss Lucie. I always thought he was the soul of honor——"

"He is, Dan."

"But why did he come here so often when the house was asleep, slipping in and going into the library where the poor master was generally sleeping in his chair?"

"Did he do that, Dan?"

"More than once."

"Did you see him?"

"Yes. I saw him three times."

"What did he do in the library?"

"Before Heaven I wish I had been blind like Miss Mona those times. Then I would not have seen Hasketh Seaforth drop something into the master's night glass."

Lucille felt her blood run cold. She clutched for support the back of the chair at which she was standing.

"Perhaps you were mistaken, Dan!" she cried, with rigid lips. "Your eyes may have deceived you."

"Would to Heaven they had!"

She came round the chair slowly and with labored breathing and laid a white hand on his arm.

"And when he went away what did you do? Anything?"

"Twice I went into the room and poured out the contents of the night glass."

"But the third time?"

"Master was awake when I opened the door, and I dared not carry out my purpose. I left the draught as Hasketh Seaforth had done."

The face of the beautiful girl grew as white as Parian marble. Her bloodless lips twitched nervously, and her hand fell from his arm.

"He has gone away. I know that," pursued Dan, breaking the strained silence. What made him go, Miss Lucie?"

The beauty of Hedstone Hall shook her head.

"Was it because he poured those drops into the night glass? If he is innocent of wrong doing——"

"He is innocent, Dan!" broke in Lucille. "Murder never entered his soul Why should Hasketh seek the life of the man who has given me a home?"

"Yes, why?" echoed Dan, with another stare. "Why in this beautiful world does anybody want to kill?" he went on. "When I heard Doctor Dredge tell the master that there was one man up North who could cure him, I resolved to keep tab on that night glass, but Hasketh Seaforth never came after that."

"No?"

"Doctor Dredge wrote the letter that brought the new doctor down here after the master said he would pay any fee and signed a paper to that effect."

"Dan, oh, Dan! Do you know what that fee is?" cried Lucille.

"I know now, Miss Lucie. I've had eyes and ears open since Doctor Burke entered the Hall."

"I am the fee, Dan! If my uncle lives I am to become the wife of Nicholas Burke."

"But you shan't, Miss Lucie!"

"I must, I say!" cried the girl. "Uncle is determined——"

"What if he should die?"

"That event would break the compact."

"Then why didn't I let the night glass remain as I found it?"

"But I tell you Hasketh is not guilty!" exclaimed Lucille. "You must believe nothing else, Dan."

"For your sake, Miss Lucie, I won't, but——"

At that moment a wild cry resounded thru the house.

"It is Mona!" cried Lucille, bounding toward the door. "The cry came from below!" and springing into the hall she darted toward the head of the stair with Dan breathless at her heels.

Lucille scarcely seemed to touch the steps as her figure flew downward. She paused in the lower hall and jerked open the library door.

Under the night lamp and clinging to a chair with the whitest of faces was crouched the blind girl. Her whole frame

(Continued on Page 19.)

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE Shooting Light justified the faith of her master, and better than that. Before day dawned, thirty hours later, the lookout, aided by the moon, sighted the twin ridges of Starvation Reefs, and presently the anchor was let go with the north end of each reef as outlying posts.

Roger felt keen interest, and he was aloft with his sea-glass when day finally broke.

The twins were an insignificant part of creation's work. They were ribbon-like in shape, the one a mile long, and its mate but little less, with a belt of water between that was a hundred fathoms from twin to twin. Each had in its center an elevation that averaged a hundred feet high, a ridge that ran almost from end to end.

Sterility was there, too, for, seen from the brigantine's rigging, nothing was to be discovered but rock. Roger knew that patches of earth were mixed in here and there, but they were so insignificant as to be invisible unless closer at hand.

The brigantine was at the scene of future operations. Having arrived, the actual labor would begin, and, having scanned the inhospitable reefs, the diver studied the water.

The Riding Brave lay somewhere there, as he had the story, and it was his part to go down to her interior, but even the tip of a mast was not to be seen above the water. Dragging must be the first step in the work, to locate the wreck. Presently he was interested to see Captain Hardy climbing the shrouds, and the skipper soon joined him. Both looked at the water, and Hardy pointed.

"The grave of the Riding Brave."

"Yes," Roger agreed. "About where do you place her?"

"It is impossible to say. I presume you understand that there is treacherous way for vessels south of the reefs, with submerged rocks on all hands. Because of this a ship must either make a wide detour or use the channel between the twins. If approached carefully the channel is safe. The last I saw of the shore from the deck was a brief view of that uplift of stone on the east ridge. Do you see what I mean? Well, the Riding Brave may have sunk anywhere between there and here. She either lies between the two north ends of the ridges, or in the open sea farther this way. Dragging will show."

"Easy matter," Roger agreed.

"I hardly expect to find her in the middle of the channel."

"Why so?"

"Wouldn't some other vessel have rubbed her masts before now and reported the fact?"

"That's a problem. The channel is not overdeep, if the charts are reliable, yet a ship of moderate draught would pass over her easily."

"That may be so. Well, we will go below and see about breakfast, and then will come our first move. Your diver's suit is all right?"

"Yes."

Hardy began the descent, but paused as he noticed Roger's attention.

"See anything?" he asked.

"Isn't that a wreath of smoke over on the east twin?"

"I see nothing."

"If it was that it's practically gone now. Looked like smoke, anyhow, and it brought up the question of whether natives or somebody else might be making a short stay ashore."

"Very little to invite anybody here. Except that both reefs can show excellent spring water, nature has put nothing on them for the use of man. Probably your smoke was floating mist."

"Maybe so."

The diver clambered down after the older man. Hagar, attended by Porgera, was on the deck, looking outward, some enthusiasm showing in her expression.

"I see that our caravan has halted at an oasis, Captain," she said with animation. "It will give our camels time to rest, and we can admire the glories of nature. It was an excellent idea to erect those temples yonder"—she pointed to the little uplifts of the ridge—"for it gives a grandeur to the oasis. Those spires and minarets are of the true classic design, and show what skill man has when designing such lofty buildings. They give character, beauty and poise to the scenery."

"Quite true," the captain replied abstractedly, his mind on other matters.

"Do you know, Madam Hagar," Roger asked, "what particular style of architecture we see there? Is it Gothic?"

Hagar smiled in strong amusement.

"Youth, youth!" she murmured gently. "So ignorant, so feeble! My good Mr. Cooper, those minarets are peculiar to Mohammedan countries, and to no other place. You should try to learn those things."

"I'll try," he promised meekly.

"Perhaps you will, but youth seldom does try. I have lived long enough to know that youth is sunken in ignorance and self-conceit."

"Youth makes good sailor-men," said Hardy, coming out of his absent-minded mood.

"Possibly so, but I have no knowledge on that point. I have never even seen the sea."

"Well," the captain added, with forced lightness, "we all agree on breakfast, so let's get at it."

The meal was eaten, and then Hardy put his men to work without delay. A boat was lowered, the drag let go, and the effort to grapple with the wreck was begun.

Roger remained on deck, and Hagar joined him and talked in her usual peculiar manner. For once the diver gave but little attention to her youth and beauty, and forgot to pour forth his sympathy. His mind was centered on the efforts of the men in the boat.

After a while the afflicted girl left his side, and he went even deeper into meditation. What was to happen when the wreck was located and visited? Hardy's explanation of what he wanted to recover had been unsatisfying, for no man would take all this trouble for trivial things.

The wreck had a secret. What was it? What did Hardy expect to find? That question had been in Roger's mind before San Francisco was left behind, and it was now acute. As Lem Soper had insinuated, the young man was there for more than the wages of a diver.

Like the captain, he had a secret motive, and the time for events seemed to be near. But what did Hardy really want to find in the Riding Brave?

It was an hour later that a shout rose from the boat, and Vilper, who had charge of the work, waved a hand and shouted loudly.

"The drag is fast, and we have surely caught hold of something. It won't let go, and doesn't seem to be a ledge. I call it the ship."

Hardy at once became energetic. The report had come much sooner than he expected, but he was ready for it and immediately became the energetic shipmaster. Bidding Roger get into his diving suit, and with the first touch of sharpness he had ever shown toward him, he proceeded to get the second boat away.

When it went the captain remained on the deck of the brigantine, his eyes on the boat, but his mind busy. Believing that it would be but a short task to strip the wreck of all he could class as of any value, he looked forward to later hours.

No matter when the undertaking was finished, he would hold the Shooting Light at anchor over a night. During that night he would secretly attach the weights to his feet, lower himself over the side of the brigantine, and then sink to his death. The captain who had not gone down with his ship would now go down to her.

In a dull sort of way he wondered what would be the theory aboard when he was missed. Would search be made for him in the water? Vilper, the only man in his confidence, had orders to do nothing of that sort, but possibly the mate would be persuaded to agree.

He was thinking so intently that he had forgotten to watch the boat, but, finally starting up, he saw that Roger was missing. Clearly the diver had gone down to the wreck.

"Poor old Riding Brave!" he murmured.

Ten minutes later there was a stir in the boat, men hauled at the line and presently Cooper reappeared. He cast off his helmet and turned his face toward the brigantine.

"I've found the wreck," he shouted, "but it isn't the Riding Brave!"

CHAPTER IX.

IT HAD never occurred to Hardy that the timbers of any other ship would be at the bottom of the channel, and he motioned imperiously. The men fell to at the oars, and the boat was soon by the brigantine.

"Are you sure the wreck isn't the Riding Brave?" the captain demanded.

"Yes," Roger returned. "It's only a small sloop, and must have been down there a good many years. Her masts are rotted away and her deck caved in at several points. The weight of a man would cause total collapse. Her name was not to be read, tho I made out enough of it to be sure she was a Malay craft."

"No other wreck near her?"

"No sign of one, sir."

"Then we will drag again. The Riding Brave must be at the tip of the twins, or possibly outside of them. We'll find her. It can't be otherwise, for the chart gives seaway until a trap of hidden reefs is reached—never mind that, tho."

The captain wheeled upon his men.

"Resume dragging!" he shouted crisply.

The order was obeyed, and the space farther north was carefully gone over. By noon it was certain that no wreck was inside the horns of the twins, but the captain's faith was not shaken. He explained why at the dinner table, with the chart before them.

"Here," he said, "you see that there is an almost direct line from the south ends of the twin reefs to a point here, with depth of water fit for any ordinary ship. But look beyond."

"Shallow water," Roger commented.

"Yes, with the trap, as I've called it, beyond. Two submerged ledges shaped like a letter V form the trap. The point is toward the farther sea, and the open portion toward the Starvation Twins. Now, if a ship traversed the channel and held a direct course she would run into that V, and she couldn't get out of it, as the V ledges are barely afloat."

"And the Riding Brave——"

"Was holding just such a course, and, deserted, must inevitably run into the trap. If she didn't sink before entering it she surely smashed upon the V. The collision would ruin her. Being stove, she would sink. If she isn't this side of the V she is in it."

"A strong wind abeam would possibly make her shift her course enough to clear."

"The wind was astern."

"Then we'll get her bones without doubt."

The dinner was eaten, and as Hagar was in a talkative mood Hardy compelled himself to force his personal troubles into the background and pay unusual attention to her. When, finally, she was about to rise he checked her.

"Madam Hagar," he said, "let us give a little attention to the future. You know what you are to do when we get to San Francisco?"

"Find your granddaughter, Miss Persis, and say that it is your order that she and I be great good friends. I shall hail her as my sister—Sister Persis—and we shall be bosom friends."

"Exactly! Now, you have said that you are a stranger in that city, so I rely upon Cooper to escort you to my granddaughter's presence."

"Quite right," she replied composedly.

"You, too, understand, do you not, Cooper?"

"Yes, sir."

"As I've told you before, there is no doubt as to what hotel you will find Persis at. Seek that place. Understand, Cooper?"

"Yes."

The diver was looking at the older man with perplexity in his mind. It had been a common thing for Hardy to puzzle him when speaking of the arrival of the Shooting Light at San Francisco, but never so much as now. The captain was dilating on plans before formed as if he was to have no part in them. Superstition was common among seafaring men. Roger wondered if Hardy had a presentiment that he would not live to reach the city.

The shipmaster hesitated and then moved his chair back from the table suddenly, saying no more just then, but as he and the diver mounted the companionway together he took the young man by the sleeve.

"Cooper," he said earnestly, "I've never had any other case appeal to me as acutely as that of the deranged girl below. Poor child! Who is she? Who are her friends, and where do they live? How shall we return her to them? Listen!"

The grasp on Roger's arm tightened.

"She must have the best of medical attention, so that her mind will be brought back to its own. At her age derangement cannot be permanent. Some terrible shock has upset her mental balance, but she can be cured. Money must not be spared to cure her, nor to advertise for her friends." A pause, and then a nervous addition. "It is my money that must be used for that purpose."

"You can easily arrange all that when you are again in San Francisco."

"Ye-es," said Hardy, hesitatingly.

At that moment Vilper appeared at the head of the companion, and when he spoke to his superior the former subject was dropped, but Roger was left with food for thought. What was wrong with Joseph Hardy?

It was the way of the captain of the ship to be calm and masterful in all instances, even in acute crises, but he had developed oddities since Hagar came on board that baffled the young man's understanding. His devotion to the mind-smitten girl was natural in a measure to all well-conditioned men, tho not his keen interest. Clearly, he felt tender love for her, as if she were his own child, yet he seemed as incapable of tenderness as a sturdy rock. All this was so possible that it was passed lightly by in the analysis Cooper gave the general situation.

The main point was: Had the captain gained the presentiment that he would not live to return to San Francisco? Half-inclined to press this possibility upon the captain, he found himself interrupted as dragging was renewed for the lost Riding Brave.

The area to be covered was so small that in two hours the workers reached the diverging points of the V. The field of operations was narrowed, and Roger felt little inclined to remain on deck when his time was soon to come. He asked permission to go in the second boat, and as Hardy liked the idea they went together, the Malays at the oars.

After their arrival the space to be hunted over narrowed still further, for the searchers were nearing the closed part of the V at every fathom dragged. Roger began to feel some bewilderment as nothing came of it, but the captain nodded, well satisfied.

"The Brave must have kept going until she ran smack upon the reefs where they meet. She never could have got over—men, row us that way!"

The order was obeyed, and Hardy pointed out what he meant.

"Here are the ledges, sharp, ugly points that would bite a ship's keel as you would a slice of bread. Look sharp, now! How much water on top? Less than three feet, just as the chart says. I don't need to remind you that a full-rigged ship like the Brave needs ten times that depth of water. Could she pass over this reefy trap?"

"Not at this point, certainly.

"We will look elsewhere."

There seemed to be no good reason why they should look, for they were all the while sending glances toward the draggers, expecting the announcement that the hulk of the Brave was found, but it served to fill in the time. At the end of ten minutes it was seen that the trap nowhere lessened its hostile powers—nothing larger than a rowboat could pass over.

"My men will have the wreck in a moment," said the captain, confidently.

Roger bent his brows in a thoughtful frown. Would it be so? The draggers were getting very near the tip of the V. Where was the wreck? Unless wedged into the trap at its end, the ship was not there. Suddenly one of the sailors cried out sharply:

"Look, look! See over yonder!"

His pointing finger indicated where, and Roger saw a boat approaching, filled with dusky-skinned men of unfriendly aspect. Except for those at the oars every one held a gun, and the rising muzzles did not make for peace of mind.

"That's a war party!" added a second sailor, in alarm.

"Yes," pursued the first speaker, "and they are getting between us and our ship!"

"Be calm!" Hardy called out stoutly. "There is no harm in them."

Just then Roger saw something that led him to doubt this hopeful prediction. His roving glance passed beyond the armed men, and, at the farther side of the east twin reef, he saw a low-lying gray schooner. One look was enough to distinguish her. The White Creeper, pirate of the seas, was there, and the strangers in the boat had undoubtedly just come from her.

Roger's gaze flashed back and to the faces of the Malays in their own boat. With the Americans unarmed and the natives equipped with guns, it became a vital question how the Malays would act. What would Captain Mosco and his mates do?

CHAPTER X.

THERE was no addition to worry as Roger studied Mosco and his mates. They sat idle but alert, and there was no friendship in the looks they sent toward the armed boat. With them on the side of Captain Hardy's party the superiority of numbers was against the natives, but the presence of the rifles made the matter wholly different.

Equipped with those guns the natives could keep at a distance and shoot every one of Hardy's force without receiving a blow in return.

Meanwhile the gray schooner was dangerously near, and the cannon in her bows had a black muzzle that looked hungry for victims.

Hardy, perfectly calm outwardly, rose in his place and hailed the advancing strangers.

"Boat ahoy!" he called out. "What's away?"

The force at the oars lessened perceptibly, and one of the party swung a long, lean hand in a curious gesture.

"Ahoy, white captain!" he replied in good English. "We want to speak with you."

"All right," returned the skipper, heartily. "What is it? What can I do for you? We are a bit short of tobacco, but we can give you a few pounds. Water casks tight and sweet? What's the trouble?"

The natives lay on their oars.

"Have you seen a strange man near here since you came? Is he in your ship, maybe, now?"

"A strange man? No! We have only the men you see here now, and the rest of my crew who sailed with me from San Francisco. What's wrong about the man?"

"He ran away, and we want him. Good reasons for it, sir. Sure he isn't in your ship now?"

"Very sure. No stranger there."

"How long since you hunted the whole ship over?"

"Well, as for that, not so recently."

Hardy, a good judge of men, had been studying the natives sharply. Altho he had tried to encourage his companions, he had been as much impressed as themselves with the belief that a wholesale butchery was to come, but he was geting a different idea now from the faces before him. The natives were brutal-looking men, and seemed fit sailors for the dreaded White Creeper, but if he knew their kind they were sincere in what their spokesman was saying.

"The question can be settled right away," he said, in quick addition. "Come with me to my ship and you and I will go over it together, from bows to stern. If anybody is there he has come without my knowledge. Shall we look?"

"Yes, yes! That is good!" was the eager reply.

"All right, mates. Follow me."

The captain gave an order to his Malay boatmen, and they fell to at the oars steadily.

"Mosco, what do you make of it?" Hardy asked softly.

"The men, they are natives of some small island. Did you see the gray schooner over back of them? That must be Bragon's White Creeper, so the fellows in the boat must be members of the pirate crew, but they do not act like mischief. If they felt like killing us they would not let us get back to your ship."

"Fact! I don't know who they want to find, but I'm satisfied he isn't in the Shooting Light, so I'll curry favor with these gunners by treating them well. Men, be careful what you say and do."

The pull to the brigantine was far from pleasant to Roger. Behind them was the other boat, with the armed desperadoes who could at any time send a volley of bullets into their predecessors, but he refrained from looking back, and found strength in Hardy's calm manner.

The impression was active then and after that the captain's personality had saved the lives of his party. Surely, the natives had not come armed so fully on a mere friendly call, and the skipper had been magnetic as he stood erect and dealt with them at the beginning.

The Shooting Light was reached, and all hands scrambled to the deck. Hardy promptly handed the dusky leader a cigar, and that person proved that he knew what to do with it. Something near to a smile was on his brutal face as he lighted and puffed at it.

The search was made, and the visitor satisfied. No hiding man was found, and, half an hour later, carrying a few minor presents, the natives went back to their boat. Waving farewells, they rowed away. The skipper stood by the taffrail and watched them go, his expression inscrutable.

"Captain," said Roger, after they were a few fathoms away, "how did you do it?"

"Cooper, I've been thirty years among such people. I know them. That only half explains, but, tho that villainous gray schooner is over beyond yonder point, and her cannon could riddle us, I look to see nothing but peace ahead."

"Are they not pirates?"

"Pirates they must be. Given ordinary conditions, that knave we have just entertained would cut my throat or yours for ten cents. They came forth to us in the V intending to shoot the lot of us, but changed their minds when I spoke to them. It wasn't hypnotism, nor anything uncanny, but just knowing how to deal with them."

"Right!" the diver agreed with energy. "You've got a way about you—but it's got to be seen. Words can't explain it."

"Merely thirty years' experience boiled down into action. Pass that by. Our mates yonder have stopped dragging. We will return and get them at it."

"How about waiting to see if the White Creeper sails away?"

"No. When the natives see us resume our former occupation, it will be the final pull in our favor. Mosco, do you and your hands set us back into the V."

The Malay looked as if he wanted to refuse, but second consideration changed his mind. The party returned to the boat and was soon back where Vilper and his water-workers waited in uncertainty.

"Get to dragging again!" Hardy ordered crisply.

"But that ship yonder is the pirate White Creeper——"

"Do you think I'll let you waste time by going over to visit him?" demanded the captain, simulating indignation. "Get to work. Seriously, men, we can do nothing better to protect ourselves than to resume our peaceful occupation. Set to at dragging!"

Opposition vanished, and as the men grappled for the skeleton of the Riding Brave, it dawned upon Roger that he had seen a new Joseph Hardy that day. Without bluster or undue force he was, nevertheless, a masterful man.

The drag was played along the bottom of the now-shallowing water, and advance toward the extremity of the V was steadily made. Presently, as Roger looked at the skipper, he saw him tugging oddly at his beard. Evidently the same idea was in both minds, and it was no surprise when, a little later, Vilper straightened up on the thwart and sharply exclaimed:

"No wreck here!"

"You've overlooked her!" Hardy declared positively.

"Impossible!"

"Captain," the diver interrupted, "let me have my turn. I'll go down and walk along the whole nose of this trap, with you paying out line for me. If the Brave is there we'll find it."

"Good! Go down."

Roger adjusted his diving suit and was soon on the bottom of the sea. The ledges approached so near each other at this point that there was not much space to cover, and it was a comparatively short time before he signaled and was among his mates again.

"No ship there, and not the least remnant of one!" he reported.

"Gracious!" muttered Hardy, blankly.

"Captain," the diver proceeded, "are you sure that the Brave was in motion and that she had a stern wind when she was abandoned?"

"Absolutely sure."

"And that she was past that uplift of rock on the east twin before mentioned by you?"

"Not the slightest doubt of it. Yes, I'm sure."

"Abandoned, and with a stern wind, she could not help driving in here, and, once in, she couldn't get out."

Vilper voiced the general idea with a pertinent question.

"Then where is she now?"

CHAPTER XI.

WHEREVER the Riding Brave was she was not found that day. Roger kept at the search with persistent energy, having himself lowered into the water at different points, and walked over as much of the sea-bed as was possible, but without important results. When the wearied men dropped work for the day, shortly before supper, a fact had been clearly established. The wreck of the Brave was not between the middle of the greater reefs and the point of the lesser ledges. What, then, had become of her?

"Suppose," one of the sailors suggested, "that she drove on them rocks and, not sinking because she couldn't drop down, she was found by the native islanders, repaired and taken away?"

"The one chance in a hundred," the captain replied. "I don't favor it. Back to the brigantine, lads!"

They went, but the diver improved the first chance to speak with Hardy privately.

"Sir," he said, "are you absolutely sure that, when the Brave was abandoned, you saw her sink?"

The shipmaster looked at the questioner, and then at vacancy. The watch in his pocket ticked off many seconds before he answered.

"I wish I knew more about this than I do," he finally replied. "You see, I was sick abed when the wreck came. I had come down with an odd fever—odd, because we had not been in a fever-haunted region, and, also, because its symptoms were unusual—so I took to my berth. I was there when the shock came—we ran onto a submerged reef a mile south of the Starvation Reefs. The ship got her death-wound, but staggered along into the space between the reefs. Then, as she was filling so fast from the great gap in her hull, we abandoned her. Cyrus Brayden, my mate, did all the work, for I was as helpless as a child. We took to the boats, rowing away into a fog as thick as a blanket. I had looked back and seen the Brave once, wallowing along, but of a sudden one of my hands cried out that she had sunk. I looked back and there was no Brave. She had gone down—she must have gone down."

Roger had listened intently, eying his companion keenly.

"And this was between the twin reefs?" he asked.

(Continued on Page 19.)

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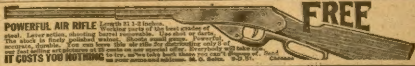

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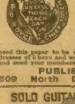
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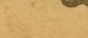

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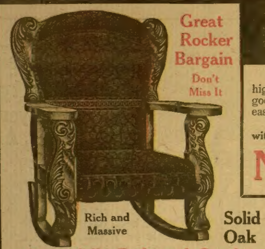

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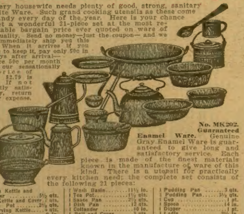
Order by No. MK230. Price $4.97. Terms: No Money in Advance. 50c in 10 Days. Balance 50c Monthly.

Guaranteed Enamel Ware Bargain

Every housewife needs plenty of good, strong, sanitary Granite Ware. Such grand cooking utensils as these come in handy every day of the year. Here is your chance to get a wonderful 21-piece set at the most remarkable bargain price ever quoted on ware of this quality. Send no money—just the coupon—and we will immediately ship you this set. When it arrives if you decide to keep it, pay only 50c in 10 days after arrival—balance 50c per month until our sensationally low price of only $2.79 is paid. If not perfectly satisfactory, return at our expense.



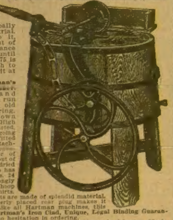
No. MK202. Guaranteed Enamel Ware. Genuine Gray Enamel Ware is guaranteed to give long and satisfactory service. Each piece is made of the finest materials known in the manufacture of ware of this kind. There is a utensil for practically every kitchen need; the complete set consists of the following 21 pieces:

1 Berlin Kettle and Cover	5½ qts.	1 Wash Basin	11½ in.	1 Pudding Pan	3 qts.
1 Tea Kettle and Cover	7 qts.	1 Tea Pot	1½ qts.	1 Pudding Pan	3½ qts.
1 Coffee Pot	2½ qts.	1 Sauce Pan	2½ qts.	1 Cup	1 pt.
1 Preserving Kettle	4 qts.	1 Dish Pan	12 qts.	1 Spoon	14 in.
2 Pie Plates	9 in.	1 Collander	10 in.	1 Dipper	1 pt.
		1 Pail and Cover	3 qts.	1 Ladle	3½ in.

Order by No. MK202. Price, $2.79. Terms: No Money in Advance. 50c in 10 Days. Balance, 50c Per Month.

SENSATIONAL WASHER SALE

Fly Wheel Has Space for Belt for Running by Power



Send coupon for this High-Speed Rotary Washer and let it prove for itself what a wonderful bargain it really is. Keep it for 10 days' trial. If you decide to keep it, make first small payment of 50c in ten days and balance at rate of 75c a month until our low price of only $9.75 is paid. If you do not wish to keep the washer, return it at our expense.

No. MK244. Hartman's High-Speed Rotary Washer. Easiest to operate hand power washer. Can be run by ten or twelve year old boy or girl without tiring. Can be operated sitting down or standing up. Note the High Speed Fly Wheel. When started, practically keeps machine going with its own momentum. Fitted with Special Wringer Attachment. Has all latest improvements. Has fewer number of working parts. Cannot get out of order. Built of genuine kiln dried Louisiana Red Cypress. Tub has corrugated bottom and sides. 24 inches in diameter. Strongly bound with three metal hoop bands. Capacity eight shirts. Balance wheel and metal parts are made of splendid material. Easy to move about. Properly placed rear plug makes it easy to clean and empty. Like all Hartman machines, this washer is supplied under **Hartman's Iron Clad, Unique, Legal Binding Guarantee,** so that you need have no hesitation in ordering.

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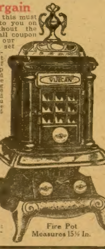
Smashing Heater Bargain

Just think what a wonderful heater this must be when we are willing to send it to you on such unheard of liberal terms, without the slightest obligation on your part! Mail coupon and we will ship it to you wholly at our risk, without a cent in advance. Then set it up, start a fire in it and see for yourself what a wonderful amount of heat it gives out for the small amount of fuel it burns. See how it brightens up the room and what a cosy air of comfort and cheerfulness it gives to the home. Compare it with any heater you have ever seen costing twice as much. Use it as your own for 10 days and then, if you are positively convinced that it is the grandest heater bargain you ever saw, pay us only 50c in 10 days and the balance of our bargain price of only $14.85 at the rate of $1.00 per month.



Fire Pot Measures 15½ In.

No. MK231. Inside diameter of fire pot, 15½ inches; diameter of body, 16 inches; height to top of urn, 50 inches; opening of feed door, 12x8 inches; floor space, 21x21 inches. **The Hot Blast** saves fuel and produces intense heat. Air is admitted through hot blast tube and passes in and entirely around body of stove. The hot air mixing with gases and smoke as they rise, ignites them, making perfect combustion—the heat, which, with ordinary stoves passes up the chimney is all utilized in the Vulcan. Draw center shaker grate is made for either wood or coal. Shaker door permits shaking of grate without opening ash pit door, preventing dust and ashes from falling out. Stove lavishly nickel trimmed. Nickeled or brass urn.

Order by No. MK231. Price, $14.85. Terms: No Money in Advance. 50c in 10 Days. Balance, $1 Per Month.

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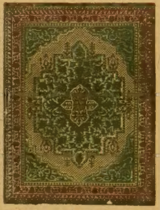
Elegant "Fairporte" Seamless Brussels Rug



We will send you this extremely handsome Rug without one cent advance payment. Just fill out, sign and mail coupon and we will ship any one of the three sizes named below that you select. If you are thoroughly satisfied that you never before heard of a rug bargain even approaching this offer, keep it and simply pay 50c in 10 days and the balance in small monthly payments as stated below, according to the size you select. Be sure to mail coupon for this wonderful rug bargain and judge its rare quality for yourself wholly at our risk.

Three Sizes, No. MK225. One of the most beautiful patterns ever woven. The handsome colorings of red, green, brown, tan, are wonderfully blended so as to harmonize with any furnishings. The center medallion is featured with conventional semi-oriental designs in exquisite colors, while throughout the body are small figures. It is extra heavy and firmly woven of all wool and worsted yarns on a heavy warp. All colors are guaranteed absolutely fast.

Order by No. MK225. 3 Sizes. Price, Size 8 ft. 3 in.x10 ft. 6 in., $16.45. Terms: No Money in Advance. 50c in 10 Days. Balance, $1.25 Per Month. Price, Size 9x12 ft., $18.75. Terms: No Money in Advance. 50c in 10 Days. Balance, $1.50 Per Month. Price, size 11 ft. 3 in.x12 ft., $23.85. Terms: No Money in Advance. 50c in 10 Days. Balance, $1.75 Per Month.

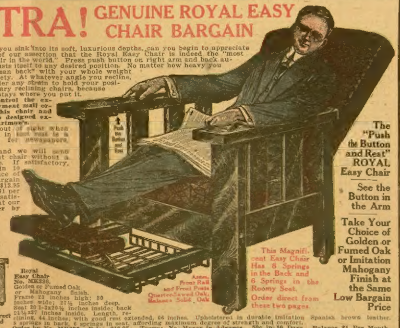
EXTRA! GENUINE ROYAL EASY CHAIR BARGAIN

Only when you sink into its soft, luxurious depths, can you begin to appreciate the full truth of our assertion that the Royal Easy Chair is indeed the "most comfortable chair in the world." Press push button on right arm and back automatically adjusts itself to any desired position. No matter how heavy you are, you can "lean back" with your whole weight with perfect safety. At whatever angle you recline, you are not under any strain to hold your position as in ordinary reclining chairs, because the chair back stays where you put it.

Hartman's control the exclusive time payment mail order rights on this chair and the pattern was designed exclusively for Hartman's.

Foot rest is out of sight when not in use and in foot rest is a hidden basket for newspapers, magazines, etc.

Mail coupon and we will send you this elegant chair without a cent in advance. If satisfactory, pay only 50c in 10 days and balance of our special bargain price of only $13.95 at rate of only $1 per month. If not satisfactory, return at our expense. Order by No. MK236.



Push the Button and Rest

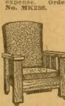
The "Push the Button and Rest" ROYAL Easy Chair

See the Button in the Arm

Take Your Choice of Golden or Fumed Oak or Imitation Mahogany Finish at the Same Low Bargain Price

This Magnificent Easy Chair Has 8 Springs in the Back and 6 Springs in the Roomy Seat. Order direct from these two pages.

Arms, Front Rail and Front Posts Quarter-Sawed Oak, Balance Solid Oak



Chair With Back Erect and Foot Rest Slid Under Seat.

Royal Easy Chair No. MK236. Golden or Fumed Oak or Mahogany finish. Frame 23 inches high; 30 inches wide; 27½ inches deep. Seat 20 1-2x20½ inches inside; back 21½x27 inches inside. Length, reclining, 44 inches; with foot rest extended, 66 inches. Upholstered in durable imitation Spanish brown leather. 8 springs in back, 6 springs in seat, affording maximum degree of strength and comfort.

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Whether you order one of these amazing bargains or not, by all means send for Hartman's Big Bargain Book. We can ship only one of nine bargains shown here to a family, but when you get this mammoth catalog you may order as many items as you please, all on Hartman's Easy Credit Terms at bed-rock prices. This wonderful book contains over 8,000 bargains in everything for the home—Furniture, Carpets, Rugs, Draperies, Sewing Machines, Phonographs, Stoves, Ranges, Silverware, Chinaware, etc., etc. No matter what item you might select, you would find it the very highest quality and at a price a great deal lower than you could buy a similar article, even for all cash, anywhere else. And, when you order from Hartman, you can take practically your own time to pay. Our credit terms are positively the most liberal ever devised—and the Hartman $12,000,000 guarantee of perfect satisfaction stands behind your every purchase. Many pages of this wonderful Bargain Book are printed in colors, showing the articles exactly as they look. It is just like bringing the combined stocks of a dozen or more big city stores right into your home. By all means, let us send you your free copy of this mammoth catalog. Write your name and address in coupon and mail to us whether you order one of these bargains or not.

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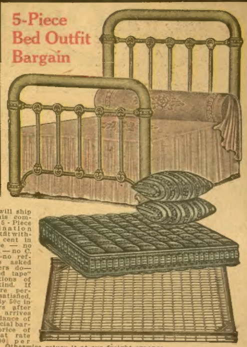
3926 Wentworth Avenue, CHICAGO, ILL.

5-Piece Bed Outfit Bargain



We will ship you this complete 5-Piece Combination Bed Outfit without a cent in advance — no deposit — no C. O. D.—no references asked as others do—no "red tape" restrictions of any kind. If you are perfectly satisfied, pay only 50c in 10 days after outfit arrives and balance of our special bargain price of $12.98 at rate of $1.00 per month. Otherwise return it at our freight expense.

5-Piece Combination Bed Outfit No. MK234. 2-in. continuous post steel bed, set off with 10 upright fillers and massive ornamental chills; 53 in. high at head; full size, 4 ft. 6 in.; three-quarter size, 4 ft.; single size, 3 ft. 6 in. White, Pea Green or Vernis Martin. Gold bronze finish. Mattress has durable, soft cotton top, excelsior filling; absolutely sanitary, covered with floral art ticking, double stitched, strong leather tufting. 2 full size (19x26 in.) pillows filled with selected hen feathers. Sanitary and odorless; attractive art ticking. Springs have reinforced angle iron frames; link fabric top connected at ends with strong helical springs.

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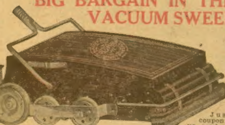
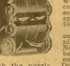
BIG BARGAIN IN THIS VACUUM SWEEPER

DON'T MISS IT.





Just mail coupon and let us send you this famous "Columbia" Vacuum Sweeper wholly at our risk, without a cent in advance. Then go over all your carpets and rugs. See how clean and bright they'll be. Notice how easily it runs—no more effort required than to run an ordinary carpet sweeper. Compare it with any Vacuum Sweeper you have ever seen, costing considerably more. If perfectly satisfactory, send us only 50c in 10 days and balance of our special bargain price of only $4.89 at rate of only 50c per month. Otherwise, return it at our expense.

Columbia Vacuum Sweeper No. MK241. Height only 6 in. Sweeps under beds and all modern furniture. Vacuum box made of deep stamping steel. No chance to warp or crack as with wooden vacuum boxes. Nozzle hinged to front of sweeper. To empty the dust bag lift up the wire bale and swing back the nozzle. Dust bag has steel frame, substantial rubber gasket and large opening; dirt can be emptied easily. Dust pans work on same principle as any carpet sweeper. Both parts empty simultaneously when you push down lever at rear of machine. Bearings—auto ball-bearings, run perfectly, assuring exceptional ease of operation. Brush—2¼ in. wide with 3 rows of genuine bristles with spiral twist setting—guaranteed. 3 large bellows produce a strong vacuum which sucks all dust right from carpet or rug fabric. All metal parts highly nickeled. Nozzle shoe made of steel, making it impervious to dents and scratches when machine is operated over tacks, doorsills, etc. Entire construction of machine, with exception of nozzle and bellows, is of steel. Brush can be taken out and cleaned. All parts easily accessible.

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Place an X in ☐ opposite bargain wanted, fill in and mail coupon.

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- ☐ Washer No. MK244.
- ☐ Rug No. MK225..............size.
- ☐ Bedroom Suite No. MK234.
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Or, American or Mexican

By Augustin W. Breeden

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CHAPTER IX.—(Continued.)

NOT THEY," said Juan. "They've had enough. It's they for the tall timber, you mark what I tell you." Then after a moment: "Harry, this is a dirty shame. I want you to know that I didn't have this done, but as it was, my actions may have been the cause of it, and I intended to walk out and face a firing squad if you were killed—I aimed to pay the penalty in kind!"

The renewed groans of the outlaw, Swedler, reminded them that he needed attention, and Harry and Juan went out to him, commanding Ysabel and her father to remain inside the house. Swedler was lying on his back, groaning and tossing; Pedro was lying on his face, dead.

"The girl killed him," said Juan, softly. "I'm glad she did. He deserted her, deserted her to that fiend Trabajar. It's a sort of providence, I think, that it should have been she who killed him."

They stooped over the gigantic form of Swedler and began to search his body for wounds, using the electric torch cautiously. There was nothing to do beyond easing him; he was plainly dying.

Juan had a question that he wanted answered before this man died.

"What was Trabajar's idea in bringing Harry here?" he asked. "Tell me, Swedler, why did he do it?"

"He wanted to make you show your hand; and he wanted—wanted——"

"Wanted what? Ransom money?"

"Yes, and to make trouble between you and Carabeo."

The dying man looked long at Juan and Harry.

"We're—we're all Americans, aren't we?" he said wearily. There was a longing in his voice—the longing of a man without a country, of the man that can't come back. "We're—we're all three good Americans, aren't we?"

"Yes," replied Juan, "good Americans."

"Listen," said the man, "I'm for you, too, I'm against Mexico. Juan, old Carabeo hates you. Watch out for him. Good night—I'm going—sleep—all good Americans. Say, can you fellers sing 'My Country, 'Tis of Thee?' Sing it. D—n it, a man has some rights when he's dyin', even if he is an outlaw—and a traitor!"

The two brothers sang together. They could not sing well at first for the lumps in their throats; but presently there rang out over the dark pines of the gulch probably the strangest song, sung under the strangest circumstances, that north Mexico, that land of traitors and revolutions, ever heard:

"My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing.
Land where our fathers died,
Land of the Pilgrims' pride,
From every mountainside
Let Freedom ring."

The dying man waved his hand feebly to the music for a time, and then they noticed that it was still. He had said "good night" for his last time; they had sung him to sleep.

The tears were rolling down their faces as they finished the last stanza of the song. Then, suddenly, Juan put out both hands to Harry, and the tears streamed down his cheeks.

"Harry, Harry," he said, "how could you be foolish enough to think I was a traitor to my country—to the Stars and Stripes?"

"But you told me you were! Why didn't you take me into your confidence?"

"Ah, Harry, you're a poor actor—you would have given me away. Don't you know Greenacres was full of Mexican spies—the whole country was full of them. Their eyes were on us; I had to play my part to fool them."

"I know it," answered Harry. "They were everywhere. Our own servants let that demon Trabajar into our house to bludgeon me in the dark."

"Even at that, Harry, I went back twice to tell you the facts in the case—that I was in the United States secret service—but the first time you were not there, and the second time, when I was ready to explain, I saw Trabajar hiding in the willows listening, and once more had to play my part. And I guess I did it at the loss of the girl I—I love."

"Wait!" cried Harry. "My God! Why did I forget that? One of these men was riding a stolen red bay mare, possibly Princess. They ran away afoot when you fired; she's tied yonder, if it is she."

Juan groaned: "Oh, my God! What other troubles are to come upon us?"

The two ran together to where the form of a horse could be seen. A glance told them the truth; it was Princess.

"It can mean but one thing!" said Harry. His face was white in the light of the electric torch and his voice was husky.

Juan lifted his clinched hands to Heaven.

"God in Heaven be my witness," he said between set teeth, "if she is in these mountains a prisoner, I'll never rest night or day till I have found her—alive—or—dead!"

CHAPTER X.

AN IRISH NAME

SENOR EL CORONEL," It was the voice of Sergeant Perez calling.

"What is wanted, Sergeant?" called Juan in reply.

"Interview under flag of truce, Coronel mio."

"How many in your party?"

"Three!"

Juan posted Harry and De Sao Paulo where they could fire from the house, and gave his electric torch to Ysabel to keep trained on the three men while he himself stood in the shadow to talk to them. He was not taking any chances with these fellows, altho he had always trusted and liked the Sergeant as well as the little Major he represented.

"What do you want?" he asked, as the three Mexicans came up blinking in the strong light.

"La paz, Coronel mio. We want to make peace with you and get your forgiveness. I, for one, did not fire on you a while ago when you rode up. These men did, but they had to. They've taken their orders from Captain Swedler—you can't blame them for that. But I've never taken an order from Swedler nor Trabajar—not once. I think I know who my superiors are. Neither myself nor Major Triesta knew that your brother was in captivity here until these U. S. troops came today demanding his release. The Major parleyed with them, and would have taken steps to secure him and turn him over to them, but that coward Trabajar ordered his men out and brought on a clash, and then deserted in the midst of the fight. Coronel mio, we would have whipped the Gringoes, even at that, machine guns and all, if his men had not played the coward as soon as he deserted!"

"He's all right," said Harry. "Let him go, Juan. I myself heard him call old Swedler down for taking orders from Trabajar."

"There's nothing at all against you, Sergeant," said Juan. "As for you two others, you may return as you came, under your truce, or you may surrender yourselves as prisoners. A private cannot take an order from a captain to fire upon his colonel, you know—that's mutiny. At the same time, if you surrender, I shall recommend complete amnesty in case you behave well as prisoners."

Juan saw a chance to tie more Mexicans to him by bonds of gratitude; he did not mean to lose the opportunity.

"We surrender, Coronel mio," they both said.

And Juan at once gave them back their arms and put them upon their honor. He calculated men's motives and their natures as an engineer calculates margins of safety. It was his business as an international spy to know how to do such things.

"Now, listen, all of you," he continued. "This prison pen is going to be destroyed. It has been here as a disgrace long enough."

The June sun was rising over the rim of the desert on the longest day of the year.

"We'll take stores," said Juan, "fire this house, and ride away. 'Ysabel, there is no charge against you. Senor de Sao Paulo, I'll put you on your honor as my prisoner. You will go with Sergeant Perez and these two prisoners of his to Major Triesta's headquarters. Ysabel, I want you to ride with Harry and me. We have a difficult task ahead of us, and you can help us, and besides, I want to keep you where I can protect you."

He wheeled suddenly upon Perez. "What kind of saddle and bridle were on this bay mare when you caught her after the skirmish day before yesterday? Was it an American outfit or Mexican?" he asked.

"Mexican, Coronel mio!"

Both Juan and Harry groaned aloud.

"Senorita Ysabel, a young woman, Miss Julia Meriton, has possibly been captured and carried off by bandits, just as you were. Here is where we two brothers need your services. You understand the heliograph, don't you, and the Morse code?"

"Yes!" The girl's face was white, her eyes brilliant. She realised what this other woman had to fear if Juan's surmises were correct.

"And you understand the heliograph and the Morse code, don't you, Harry? You remember we used to play at it so much when we were youngsters together?"

"I remember it very well," replied Harry. "I can send slowly, and I can receive if it's slow enough."

"All right. You two stay together. No matter what happens, stick together. Harry, I put her in your care. Don't let anything happen to her. You take Diablo. You look enough like me—but wait, you'll have to change clothes with me. He'll never let you ride him unless you look exactly like me. He might kill you. Come into the cabin to change. Sergeant Perez, put the easiest saddle on the red bay for Senorita Ysabel. These two must ride and ride like mad. I'll take old Hero."

The two men went into the house for a few minutes, and when they emerged again, it would have taken a shrewd eye to discover that Harry was not Juan, and Juan not Harry. Diablo was completely deceived.

The two peons, with the help of Perez and De Sao Paulo, scooped two shallow graves. And Harry, kneeling down by the body of the great red-bearded giant, Swedler, printed with a pencil upon a pine shingle: "Thomas Swedler, American Citizen." Juan watched what he was doing and approved. Then father and daughter took leave of each other, and while Perez's party remained to finish the burial of the two men and fire the house, Ysabel and the two brothers rode rapidly away to the north.

They galloped till noon, over foothills, along dry arroyos, across wide mesas where the dead grama grass whistled in the hot June wind. They were heading north toward a mountain fastness that Juan knew, where raiders of the American frontier often took their booty or their prisoners. But at noon he said:

"You two ride on to Gold Butte Canyon. They're friendly to me there. I must ride northeast and visit Arco del Angeles. If she has—has been carried across the border she is apt to be in one of those two places. Besides, if I ride fast enough I may be able to get a helio before the sun goes down. Whatever you two find out you'll not be able to signal me before tomorrow morning. I'll be almost due east of you. Tonight, study and practice that code till you get it. Wait for an answering flash after every word. Don't try it till the sun has at least twenty-four degrees, because I can't answer till then, and you'll just be wasting your time and running a chance of getting yourselves caught."

He took his folding mirror apart by breaking the hinges, and gave Harry one side of it.

"Now, listen," he said again, very slowly. "If you rescue her, take her up before you. She's not heavy, and Diablo can carry you both. Don't take any chances with a slower horse."

"If we find her," said Ysabel, "I'll drop out of the race, and she shall ride her own mare, Princess."

"You will not!" snapped Juan. "Harry, do as I instruct you. And now, goodby."

He shook hands warmly with his brother and the girl, and they parted.

Juan had in his possession a great deal of the information he had gone into Mexico to secure. He had in his wonderful memory the approximate strength, equipment and position of both Trevino's and Pablo Gonzales' forces. He knew about how many there were of the outlaw band still within striking distance of the American expeditionary force. But best of all, he had organized a secret service system with the Italian, Cuchetta, at its head, and it would furnish him to a point back of Pershing's lines with all the important information. He considered that within three

YOUR HEART

Does it Flutter, Palpitate or Skip Beats? Have you Shortness of Breath, Tenderness, Numbness, or Pain in left side, Dizziness, Fainting Spells, Spots before eyes, Sudden Starting in sleep, Nervousness, Hungry or Weak Spells, Oppressed Feeling in chest, Choking Sensation in throat, Painful to lie on left side, Sinking or Smothering Sensation, Difficult Breathing, Heart Dropsy, Swelling of feet or ankles, or Neuralgia around heart? If you have one or more of the above symptoms, don't fail to use Dr. Kinsman's Heart Tablets. Not a secret medicine. It is said that one person out of every four has a weak heart. Probably three fourths of these do not know it, and hundreds wrongfully treat themselves for the Stomach, Lungs, Kidneys or Nerves. Don't take any chances when Dr. Kinsman's Heart Tablets are within your reach. More than 1000 endorsements furnished.

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In many instances—Persons have suffered untold agony for years doctoring for nervous weakness, stomach, liver or kidney disease or some other ailment when their real trouble was lack of iron in the blood.—How to tell.

New York, N. Y.—In a recent discourse Dr. E. Sauer, a well known Specialist who has studied widely both in this country and Europe said: If you were to make an actual blood test on all people who are ill you would probably be greatly astonished at the exceedingly large number who lack iron and who are ill for no other reason than the lack of iron. The moment iron is supplied all their multitude of dangerous symptoms disappear. Without iron the blood at once loses the power to change food into living tissue and therefore nothing you eat does you any good; you don't get the strength out of it. Your food merely passes through your system like corn through a mill with the rollers so wide apart that the mill can't grind. As a result of this continuous blood and nerve starvation, people become generally weakened, nervous and all run down and frequently develop all sorts of conditions. One is too thin, another is burdened with unhealthy fat; some are so weak they can hardly walk; some think they have dyspepsia, kidney or liver trouble, some can't sleep at night, others are sleepy and tired all day; some fussy and irritable, some skinny and bloodless, but all lack physical power and endurance. In such cases, it is worse than foolishness to take stimulating medicines or narcotic drugs, which only whip up your fagging vital powers for the moment, maybe at the expense of your life later on. No matter what any one tells you, if you are not strong and well you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see for yourself how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run down people who were ailing all the time double, and even triple, their strength and endurance and entirely get rid of their symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form, and this, after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. You can talk as you please about all the wonders wrought by new remedies, but when you come down to hard facts there is nothing like good old iron to put color in your cheeks and good sound, healthy flesh on your bones. It is also a great nerve and stomach strengthener and the best blood builder in the world. The only trouble was that the old forms of inorganic iron like tincture of iron, iron acetate, etc., often ruined people's teeth, upset their stomachs and were not assimilated and for these reasons they frequently did more harm than good. But with the discovery of the newer forms of organic iron all this has been overcome. Nuxated Iron for example, is pleasant to take, does not injure the teeth and is almost immediately beneficial.

NOTE—The manufacturers of Nuxated Iron have such unbounded confidence in its potency that they authorize the announcement that they will forfeit $100.00 to any Charitable Institution if they cannot take any man or woman under sixty who lacks iron and increase their strength 200 per cent or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. Also they will refund your money in any case in which Nuxated Iron does not at least double your strength in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all drug-

or four days his work of organization would have been complete, and he could have disappeared, got himself reported killed, and retired behind the American lines in hiding while his work went on. Now this danger to Julia Meriton had broken in upon his plans. Still he was nearly thru, anyway, and so he gave this personal expedition his entire thought.

He rode at a pace that endangered his horse's life in order to try to get into communication with some American flying column before sunset and possibly get some news. The expedition at Nixthimal ranch was out of his way, and he was sure that they had no news from the Meritons, or they would have given it to him the day of the battle. He must find an expedition farther north and west.

He met a few bands of roving Mexicans that day. They looked at his citizen's clothing, cursed him under their breath for a Gringo, but had respect for the beautiful Springfield and Colt's he carried. He also met a few Mexican civilians. "Had there been any recent raids on the border?" he asked. "Yes." "Where?" "Quien sabe?" He got always the same tormenting answer.

A little before sunset he gained a high rocky point near the famous Arco del Angeles. Far away to the north of him he located with his glasses a small party of American troops, or so he thought them. He tried his heliograph.

"U. S. A.," he called.

He thought he got an answering flash He put his glasses to his eyes, and tried to find whether any one was in a position for signaling. He saw the front of an auto with the wind shield turned just right to have made that flash. He grew desperate.

"U. S. A., U. S. A.," he kept calling.

Finally there was an answering flash.

"A. N. Y. N. E. W. R A I D S?

The sun was going down. He doubted if they could get him an answer from the northwest now He watched and got, "Y., A. T.——" They were economizing, and not waiting for his flashes between words just as he had not waited. "W. I.——"

A low-lying western cloud, a mere streak on the horizon, obscured the sun, and he never got another letter.

Juan felt an icy tug at his heart. He was ready to fall on his knees and pray for this girl's safety. That "W. I." meant for him, Willowcroft; it could mean nothing else.

But Juan knew there was no time to lose. He was now within five miles of the bandit stronghold of Arco del Angeles, a hellish place with an angelic name. He knew he had no influence with the bandits who gathered there. His only chance to learn anything was to sneak past their pickets and spy upon them

The moon was past its full and would rise late. He must steal in before moonrise, and that would be while the camp was still full of life and movement, but there was no other chance. He tethered old Hero in a little mountain gulch, and climbed up a rocky defile to the actual arco that gave the place its name, an arched way along a mountainside, where two wide-awake sentinels with repeating guns could hold a small army at bay. It was the only approach to the stronghold.

Juan's path past the guard that was sure to be stationed here was by one of three routes—secrecy, bribery, or murder. He could certainly not pass him in secret. He decided to try the second course, and failing in that to resort to the third.

He slipped up close. The guard was sound asleep or dead drunk, probably the latter, and behind him the camp was in an uproar of merriment. Juan came close, caught the man's throat between his hands, and choked him until he could not make the least noise. Then swiftly he disarmed him

"Listen!" he hissed into his ear. "I must have your clothes. Let me have them for half an hour, and I'll give you more gold than you ever saw. Refuse me, and I'll kill you and take them."

"Sure, I'd rather be a rich villain than a poor corpse!" the sentry answered in a rich Irish brogue that was music to Juan's ears

"Then listen, Paddy," said Juan. "I'm an American, as you see. My mission here is strictly a private one. A few days ago Willowcroft ranch, across the border in the States, was raided, and a young woman carried off."

"The dirty spalpeens!" There was no doubting the Irishman's tone for Juan, who was feeling what the man put into his voice unconsciously.

"You have a daughter of your own, then?" he queried.

"Three av 'em, in St. Louis, three pretty little Mahoneys But go on wid yer tale"

"That's all. Is the girl here?"

"No. But I've heard all about that Willowcroft fight. It was the same day as the raid we made on Wirley."

"On Wirley? Ah, now I understand! But then there was a raid on Willowcroft? Was Doctor Meriton or his daughter harmed?"

"I niver heard av it, if they was, me bhoy; but I did hear this: I heard that thim two, that doctor and his daughter, harmed four Mexicans some considerably Thim devils dynamited the house."

"My God!"

"They did that; but while they was rushin' it, it seems them two Meritons got two apiece. Say, mister, isn't Meriton an Irish name?"

"It is," replied Juan, with consideration for the higher verities only.

"I thought so, because of something else that was told me about that fight. It was like this: Thim devils would have got that girl and her father, anyway, if it hadn't been for the troops comin' down from Greenacres just then on their way to Wirley. Some cavalry scouts and four companies of infantry hove into sight, like the British at Lucknow, just in toime. And as the vanguard was trailin' by, a lad av a bhoy, footsore an' weary, was hobblin' along, and this Irish lassie, this Miss Meriton, runs out to him and stops him, and she makes him wait a bit, and then she leads out a beautiful bay mare of hern, and she says, says she: 'Here's something I'll give you; it's for your whole company. Whichever wan of you is most footsore kin ride an' save your feet. It's all I have to give,' says she. Now, wasn't that like a big-hearted Irish lassie?"

"And a day or two later that little bay mare fell into the hands of a Mexican raider, and now she's in Mexico."

"How do you know, sir?"

"I know."

"Say," the Irishman looked shrewdly at Juan, "say, you're Juan Gonzaulus, the spy, or me name's not Mahoney."

"I guess your name's not Mahoney, then," grunted Juan. "How much do you want for this information?"

"Look here, Mr. Gringo, what kind of a maverick do you take me for? If I've eased your mind about the little colleen I'm satisfied."

"Say, who are you?" Juan shot the question at the man.

"Be the same token, who are you?"

"Juan Gonzaulus, American spy."

"I'm Daniel Mahoney, American spy, one dozen aliases, six languages, four make-ups," the Irishman checked off his points proudly.

"But I've never heard of you under the name Mahoney," protested Juan. "You are Curley Wilson, once with Fletcher Mayo. I never heard you called Mahoney."

"That's because it's me real name. And besides, I'm a lone wolf spy."

"Oh, I see!"

"And now, Colonel Gonzaulus, where have you been today that you haven't heard this news? Your secret's out all over Chihuahua today. Them two fellows you took with you to that fight at Nixthimal leaked. They told how you constantly sent helio signals to the Americans, and now old Carabeo's crowd is sending runners all over the country putting a beautiful price on your head. He sent one here, passed me about two hours ago. He sent another to Gold Butte Canyon. Your usefulness is crippled. But hist! Some one is coming. Light a cigaroot and spit Mex to beat the devil."

"Oh, my God," groaned Juan. "My brother Harry rode to Gold Butte Canyon today on my horse and dressed in my clothes. Oh, my God!"

"They'll kill 'im, that's all," reiterated the Irishman. "But spit Mex now, man, spit Mex."

"No" thundered Juan. "I'm leaving here Let 'em chase me if they want to!"

CHAPTER XI

MY LADY OF THE SILVER STAR

YSABEL and Harry got word of Julia's safety long before Juan did, and they had learned that Juan's secret was out even before that. They got this news in the form of bullets flying at them from ambush. Still they did not change their course, but followed Juan's instructions, and rode on toward Gold Butte Canyon. They had to run the gantlet of ambush after ambush, and were chased by numerous horsemen, and fought running fights. Juan's wisdom in giving them the two fastest horses in the State of Chihuahua was now apparent. Then, just at sunset, and when they were within ten or twelve miles of the mouth of Gold Butte Canyon, they learned from an American cattleman that Meriton and his daughter were both safe at Greenacres

"There is no time now to wait and send a message to Juan. He will learn it as soon as we do," said the girl.

Still Harry demurred. He wanted to stay overnight and send a message the next morning, and he insisted And so they hid themselves for the night in a deep arroyo. He was so disturbed over his brother's probable fate that the girl held his hand to comfort him, and several times she spoke to him half endearingly, but called him Juan and then corrected herself.

Harry had long since given up any intention of trying to marry Julia Meriton. He could not rob his courageous younger brother, least of all since that brother had dared so much to save his life from brigands; and he now began to find a warm feeling in his heart for this girl whose father, De Sao Paulo, he had come to respect profoundly during their imprisonment together.

Next morning, as soon as the sun was the required twenty-four degrees high, as nearly as Harry could judge, he began to try his helio.

"J. S. A. F. E.," he repeated several times; but he received no answering flash. After a time they gave it up, and decided to ride north toward the international boundary.

But their mirror flashes had been seen by the enemy, and there was soon a full hue and cry. Their race across the desert can best be described in the words of Kipling's "East and West:"

"'Twas up and over the desert waste
As blown dust devils go!
And the dun he went like a stag of ten,
But the mare like a barren doe!

"The dun, he champed upon the bit
And slugged his head above,
But the red mare played with the snaffle bar.
As a lady plays with a glove!"

The dun did not "fall at the water course," as in Kipling's famous tale, but the race came to an end in a manner quite as sudden. A villain who had just received notice of the price on Juan's head, and recognized him, as he thought, in the man on the dun, squatted in the mesquite and fired at Harry's heart. Harry at the same instant gave the Mexican death where he had expected gold, before he himself plunged under the feet of the flying Diablo.

Ysabel turned the red mare back and pulled him free from the plunging horse. She saw as she looked into Harry's eyes that her trouble was only just beginning. Then she heard shouts and shot and hailing signals. From three different directions men were approaching the spot. One of Pershing's flying columns of bandit-chasers was bearing down from the north: the brigands that had been pursuing them for an hour were still coming at a dead run from the south: and Juan Gonzaulus was riding like mad toward them out of the sunrise.

There was no battle, for the bandits turned tail as soon as they saw that they were outnumbered, and Juan and the U. S. troops came up at about the same time.

"Is he dead?" Juan's face was white and he could not speak above a whisper for his emotion.

"I don't know," replied Ysabel.

Before they started north again, with Harry in a profound coma in which he hovered between life and death, Juan went to the captain of the U. S. troops and handed him his resignation as a secret service man, bidding him deliver it to General Pershing.

"Not that I wouldn't stay and fight it out if I could do any good," he said in the letter of resignation, "but my usefulness as an active spy beyond your lines is now entirely gone. Get Daniel Mahoney. He's a past master in the art in which I am an amateur, and he's now a lone wolf spy at Arco del Angeles. If you will appoint a meeting-place and communicate it to me, I will furnish him with all the data I have, and will give him the roster of my correspondents in the field. I shall, of course, turn over all information to General Bell, as soon

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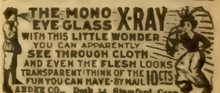

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* * * * *

"That crazy old calendar clock sure has got the jimmies," said the weak voice of a very pale man, who was lying on a snowy bed at Willowcroft. "A while ago I woke up and looked at it, and it said the twenty-ninth. Then I dozed off and woke up and looked again, and it said the thirtieth. Now it's jumped over to the first."

Both Ysabel and Julia hurried from where they were sitting at work on some white garments, and came to the sick man's bedside.

"What's the matter, Harry?" asked Ysabel.

"Where's your star?"

"My star?"

"Yes, the star you were wearing when you found me in the desert and pulled me out from under Diablo's feet—the silver star you always wear on your forehead."

"Oh, she left it off today, because you are getting so much better," said Julia, quickly, humoring the sick man's fancy. "But what was that about the clock?"

"That calendar hand jumps a day every five minutes," said the sick man, with a wan, humorous smile.

"It's hurrying for the fifteenth of July," said Julia, with a becoming blush. "Your brother Juan and I are going to be married on that day, and it's hurrying to the happy event."

"Ysabel, Ysabel!" murmured Harry, softly, taking the Spanish girl's hand. "My Lady—of the Silver Star—let's make it a double wedding! But no," after a moment, "I'd be a dog in the manger. I'm a consumptive."

"You're no such thing!" cried both girls at once. "The doctor from Greenacres Sanitarium took a sample of your blood, several samples, and examined them for the germ, before he gave you ether and probed for that bullet, and he says you absolutely have no germ." It was Julia who finished the speech.

"And if you're of the same notion when you're entirely well and in your right mind," murmured Ysabel, "then we'll make it a double wedding. And my dear old Daddy will be present, too, Harry," she finished. "He's now in El Paso, one of the many fugitives from Mexico, and will probably never go back."

"Praise de Lawd!" shouted old Aunt Mandy, as she waltzed into the room from the hall where she had been eavesdropping. "Marse Harry, I done tole you, you was er strong ez a buck, and dat you didn't hab none o' dem Germans in yore system!"

The End.

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It isn't every client who is able to keep his own counsel.

Some men make room at the top by pushing other men off.

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The more praise a man bestows himself the wiser he is not.

A woman's inconsistency may be the greatest of her many charms

And a lot of good resolutions are manufactured the morning after.

One-half the population of a village knows all about how the other half lives.

Two men may live together in peace and harmony, but no two women can do it

He's a wise man who makes the mistake of guessing a woman's age too young

A great many men make their mark in this world because of their inability to write

And lots of people seem to go to church for the purpose of picking flaws in sermons.

We haven't much use for misers, but it is far better to freeze on to your money than burn it.

There is nothing quite so unsatisfactory as the good judgment a man might have used but didn't.

It is easier to criticise the small mistakes of others than it is not to make a few large ones yourself.

When a man does a fool thing that gets him into trouble he is sure to say that "accidents will happen'

There are two distinct classes of college graduates: Those who accept positions and those who hunt jobs.

Few women are really afraid of mice, but they hate to disappoint the men, who seem to expect them to be afraid.

Men are given to flattery for selfish reasons, and she is a wise woman who swallows what they say with a grain of salt.

It is the rankest kind of folly for a man to expect the world to grow better until he begins to notice improvement in himself.

Imitation may be the sincerest flattery, but the proprietor of a patent medicine is never flattered when the druggist offers something "just as good."

Eck Lowrey's Luck

Or, In Quest of Douglas Beechmere

By I. M. Shepler

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CHAPTER IX.

OXBOW RANCH

THE frosty nights had come to Eck's Indiana home by the time his feet turned up the hills to Oxbow ranch. This was the name of the ranch from which Joshua had last heard from his son. Pickett was the name of its owner then. Joshua had told Eck that Pickett had sold the ranch long before. Eck did not expect to find him here, but he felt hope that its present owner would know where he might find him if he were yet living.

There had been times on this summer trail that Eck had actually been homesick. Distance lent some luster to the memory even of tricky Jim, and he would have said "Howdy" gladly had his brother some day come walking in on him, or crossed his path.

His homesickness had never been allowed to stick its ugly face into his mind too long. If it had there might never have been joyful word to send back to the old man who had given up seeing his son upon this earth, and who had settled down to await meeting him in another world.

Eck often smiled at his grandfather's fear that he might become a victim of the wanderlust, or a rolling stone for the sheer love of rolling. The working from task to task as he had come along was not so bad as the times he could not get work, but the fifty dollars in his belt was still intact and safe

His grandfather anxiously inquired about his financial condition each letter, and demanded to be told all that he happened thru as he went along. The telling of the incident with Bill Doty had been the hardest to write. He expected reproof for taking up so easily with a stranger. Instead, his grandfather had said:

"Of course all you meet up with are strangers to you, and you must depend upon your own common sense soon to find out those who are to be trusted and those who are not. Don't tell the others in your letters home about it. I see by the papers that they got that chap for whom Bill Doty mistook you."

His grandfather, however, condemned the way Eck got his dinner at Clark Beechmere's, and was pleased that the boy had had to pay for it.

To get to the Oxbow ranch, Eck worked his way thru Wyoming until he struck the trails of the Yellowstone Park. He crossed the Crow reservation in one part, then made a bee line for Billings. From Billings he would get the route out to Bluff, the postoffice named in an old letter he carried. From here he must find the ranch

At Billings he saw some one resembling Bill Doty dodging into a saloon.

"It's Bill or his twin or his ghost," he thought

The Oxbow ranch had belonged to the before-mentioned Pickett in the days of Beechmere's stay. It had been sold to a man from Wales shortly after his leaving, and this person had not been able to tell Joshua Beechmere, when the latter visited the ranch years before, where the Picketts had gone, or whether his son had written back to the ranch inquiring if letters had come from any one for him. He had never sent such an inquiry to him.

The man from Wales, in the years since, had sold to some Montana brothers by the name of Duluth. These men could tell Eck of the Picketts. They were running a sheep ranch somewhere this side of Sulphur Springs. He got the direction so nearly as to know he could not miss it

They told him: "The way we know is this: They have got an old Scotchman with them called McDonegal. He was over here a year ago looking at a new breed of sheep we had imported from his native land, and he bought some of these. You'd better stay and work for us."

Eck remained with the Duluths long enough to get the money to tide him over the trip to the Pickett ranch, but he would stay no longer. Arrived at the ranch, he found matters prosperous. The house was large and well furnished. It was the first place that Eck had struck so far that reminded him of home.

The first person he encountered was the big red-faced, middle-aged Scotchman, with gray whiskers straggling all about and under his smooth-shaven chin. Twenty years before, McDonegal, a distant relative of the Picketts, had herded sheep somewhere on Scotland's hills

It was out among the cow and sheep byres, as the Scotchman called them, that he and Eck met.

"An' who be ye?" asked McDonegal, giving Eck's well-worn clothes and general tired appearance a critical survey.

The boy briefly explained.

"Twenty years behind a man, lad, is a long time," confided the Scotchman; "but fur a' that I know a mon once lost a time o' forty-two year to be found by means o' a small notice twice in a mere parish paper. But coom on in. You look fagged oot, an' the meal is near ready."

As he went to the house McDonegal told Eck that of the family only the grandson of the old man who owned the ranch and himself were at home.

"Gran'sire and his son have gone for the winter to Germany to some healin' springs gran'sire wanted to try. Charley boy, who is learnin' ta be a doctor, come home o' late to help look after the business," he explained.

Eck found Charley a pleasant-faced, friendly young man of about 25. He gave his guest a cordial greeting, and talked to him freely of Douglas, whom he felt sure he must remember.

Eck had a tintype picture of Douglas taken at 15. From that Charley finally recalled the face, and said it was that of the cowboy who had been coaxed away by a companion to the gold mines in British Columbia.

As Eck really wanted to stay at the Picketts', and since Charley as well as McDonegal was anxious to have him remain, he stirred himself around lively to help. He and the younger man both worked hard to get in the winter supply of fuel, the newcomer all the time getting in a fund of information about the keeping of the sheep owned by the Picketts, which, by the thousands, were now being driven out onto winter feeding grounds.

The sheep, so many hundred to the flock, were tended by men called herders, each man having a flock to look after, and McDonegal was the chief camp tender, tho at times, to the far out flocks, he sent other camp tenders. This work suited Eck fairly well, for there was nothing difficult in taking out the teams to pull the "sheep wagons" to the new grounds if needed, or in taking out provisions to the herders at intervals.

On his return from one of the feeding grounds farthest out he was asked by McDonegal, now confined to the house by a severe cold, "How's No. 12 coming on"'

'Staley, you mean?" asked Eck. It was still difficult for him to call a man by a number. Herd No. 12 was feeding along some cottonwood-covered bluffs

"All O. K., I guess. Why?" he asked again

"Staley has—or did have—a shady reputation." It was Charley who answered "There has been an exodus of herders from this region lately, and it has left us a little short on men," he continued "Staley herded for McManus the last two years and McManus said he had but little fault to find with the man, and would have kept him longer if he had needed him."

It was not long before the herder called No. 11 was taken sick. Charley pronounced it a clear case of pneumonia, and had him brought to the house where he might be given care. Where to get a herder to take his place was the next question.

"What's the matter with me trying it a while?" asked Eck.

"Nothing, only you're not much used to such a drove of sheep. Think you wouldn't get rattled in a blizzard and let them wander away from you and get lost?" asked McDonegal. Then, before Eck could reply, he added:

"I think you wouldn't. Besides, I will give you two of my best dogs, Lora and her big mate. Why, Lora has herded great droves and brought them thru without any man's help herself. She has taken a big notion to you since you came, anyway."

And so, without many words, Eck loaded up some extra provisions and was driven over to take the place of the sick herder.

The sheep herders were provided with wagons that were pulled to the grounds with teams from the ranch

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The teams were then taken back. These wagons had for a bed on the wheels a houselike structure furnished with a door and a window, a stove, a bunk and lockers for food, the herder living in this and doing his own cooking. It was a lonely life, except for the sheep and dogs, and a man might be away for weeks from the sight of other human beings, except for the camp tender's visits.

Eck brought along a pile of books and papers. He was not going to be lonely, tho, like Sandy McFern, for he did not expect to make this his life work by any means.

The sheep wagon belonging to Eck's drove was run into a clump of willows and birch trees. Not far from this a high and long overhanging ledge of rock made a fine shelter for his sheep, should storms come. McDonegal gave him some extra instructions in the matter of herding in addition to that which Eck had naturally picked up.

"When the snow comes the wind mostly blows it along off the grass, or the warm wind comes and soon melts it," was one thing he remembered the old sheepman telling him.

"The wolves will be your worst fear, especially if a storm comes up quick and catches your sheep out of the fold and you not about," was further information the man had insisted on repeating to him.

Eck guessed that McDonegal felt some fear that a boy from the safely inhabited lands would turn coward or dilatory in a time of stress.

On one of the Scotchman's visits, when he was stopping a while with Eck, he suddenly said:

"Ah, there, Aleck. But I sure forgot to gie Staley tha quinin' he'd ordered me ta bring him, an' him wi' a bad cold right now, an' I've na time to be goin' back, fur that lad wi tha pnemony is givin us a' awful hard time watchin' him"

"I will walk over and take it tonight. The sheep will be in fold, and the dogs keeping a lookout," Eck told him.

"A' right, then, lad," said McDonegal.

The night was clear and there was a moon, and the way Eck went was easy traveling. Before he reached the sheep wagon he heard loud voices. Coming closer, above Staley's coarse and now rather thick tones, was one sharp and shrill that he was sure could not be unfamiliar, tho he wondered at first where had he heard it. Listening closely, he knew. It was Bill Doty—Bill Doty, away up here!

Eck called to Staley, who opened the door, but only in part. It was wide enough, tho, for Eck to see a boy's hand reach out and jerk a jug from off the floor, and no doubt whisk it out of sight.

"Who've you got in there with you, Staley?" Eck asked, handing up the medicine.

"Ah, a young friend from over on the A. B. ranch. Stephens is his name. Come in and see my new friend, Sam. He's a chicken in age, but he's most flew all over the world in his day. Come in and have a cheer-me-up."

"Naw," drawled Eck. "I gotta be getting back to my sheep."

At that instant Staley's companion peeped shyly about the door. It was Bill Doty, twinkling eyes, freckled short nose and plaid cap.

"Must be a new cap," Eck mused. He knew that Bill left that other one on the train.

CHAPTER X.

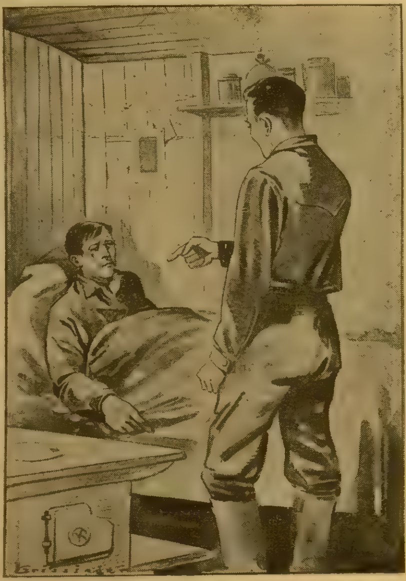
ECK SAVES THE FLOCK

Eck hurried back to his own wagon. He was worried to find Bill Doty here. What was Bill doing up in these regions? Hence the next time McDonegal came with supplies, Eck asked about the A. B. ranch and its owner.

"Beyon' where ye see thon line o' hills lies the ranch you ask of," slowly replied the Scotchman. "We let him hev water down our right o' way. Lad, you seem trusty, so I tell you what I'd not whusper to many another, but we none o' us quite trust Stephens, owner o' the A. B. He came here wi' but a sma' flock. Today he hes his thousands. Increasin' too fast, I say. He keeps a bad lot about him. It's whuspered thot many a lamb and sheep laid to the takin' off by the wolves or coyotes hes gone into his flock, an' that in storrums they've gone in by the hundreds, an' not down crevices, or eaten by the wolves 'cause they strayed an' got lost from the herder. Some day he will get his due ef this be true."

"Stephens," Eck now explained, "has a young relative visiting him. I met him once. Warn Staley to let him alone."

McDonegal went after Staley because of the company he kept, and Staley defended his new friend. He was a nephew of Stephens from back East somewhere, he said.



"Better make yourself scarce after this."

McDonegal, with no more specific information than Eck had given him, could not say more than he had, but he warned Staley that if he caught that boy bringing his whisky up from town he would report him to his uncle, and discharge the man he brought the whisky to.

"Ye know yer old failin', Staley," said McDonegal; "an tha Pickett ranch is in no humor now ta be losin' three or four thousan' dollars wi' you pittin' yerse'f in a condition ta let the flock be destroyed right suddint in a blizzard, or eat up wi' the wolves. See?"

Staley muttered and vowed vengeance against whoever was telling lies on him.

Bill Doty had not recognized Eck that night, and so made no effort to keep off his grounds. To his own vast surprise, Bill, gun on his shoulder, a couple of dogs at his heels, came smack upon Eck watching his sheep. He stopped suddenly, then smilingly held out his right hand.

"Oh, no, Bill! No familiarity of that kind," was Eck's sober answer. "We're not to be friends. And you had better stay away from No. 12, or I'll tell him your story."

"Say, don't let that get around until it comes to my uncle's ears," coaxed Bill. "Call me Sam Stephens. Uncle's some up here. Fine ranch he's got. Good name, Stephens, to conjure money by. Guess I'll stay here and grow up with the country. Been talkin' to uncle about it."

With this Bill sat down upon a bowlder and proceeded to blow and plan his own future, and Eck uneasily listened a while, thinking that Stephens was no more his uncle's real name than it was Bill's.

At last, running down for the want of an answer now and then, Bill arose to go, and Eck said:

"You stay away from me entirely, and Staley, too, and I will have no occasion to call you either Bill or Sam. Keep your distance and behave yourself."

Bill left him with an airy bow. He made no promises.

It was well that for some reason McDonegal, on his last trip, had left an old pack mule in Eck's care, or the latter might not have thought of leaving his own warm bunk the night the first extra Montana blizzard he had actually ever encountered came off.

All day there had been touches of sharp cold steel in the air, and low in all the horizon that Eck could glimpse a dark haze had hung. Even at home this would have presaged a peculiar storm. The dogs were uneasy, too, and kept milling about the sheep.

"Better get 'em in early, Lora," Eck told the big collie, and she said "yes," as nearly as a dog could say it.

It was going to be night long before the usual time, so Eck and the dogs rounded in the big drove, and sent it into its sheltered quarters.

As they huddled together, backs to the way of the wind, a man came hurrying ahead of the snow on a buckboard.

"Say," he called to Eck, "I saw Pickett's No. 12 down to that new shack they've built close at the end of Glen Creek. It's a sort of a catch den for travelers—no good on earth but for drink and gambling. He didn't look to me as if he were able to get back to his wagon. That's a fine lot of sheep he's left grazing out there in the open, and the wolves are licking their chops."

Eck glanced in at the glowing stove; the coffee was sending out a delicious odor to his hungry senses. He was already chilled thru.

"If I wasn't so new to the country, but how do I know I'd get there safe myself?" he said aloud to himself.

For five minutes while he poured himself some hot coffee and drank it he wavered back and forth. Then he decided, as he really had intended to do from the first, in spite of his questioning.

"My sheep are safe, and the dogs will guard them. Old Lora will never bat an eye this night, and there's the old mule. Good thing, maybe, that McDonegal had to bring him along with an extra load and then leave him for me to get that pebble out of his foot. Old Pack will get me there

Thus Eck encouraged himself as he brought the old mule from his sheltered cove.

Old Pack got him there just as dark was settling, and the snow beginning to come in blinding sheets with alternate clearing spells. The No 12 sheep wagon was cold, with no sign of life about. In the distance Eck could hear the bleating of the sheep. He galloped old Peck in the direction of the sound. The dogs of No. 12, with some others, were furiously driving the sheep in a direction opposite from that which Eck guessed they should go. The protecting cliffs were nearer the wagon. Some one was yelling at them.

"Is it you, Staley?" he yelled.

"No. Is it you, Pluggy?"

A horse and rider brushed against the mule, and Eck saw Bill Doty. Bill backed away, but Eck, the situation very evident to him, followed with the butt of his whip uplifted, calling hoarsely:

"We'll take these sheep home, Bill, do you understand? Head them back!"

A swirl of snow separated them for a few seconds. He heard a voice call, "Go back with him! The swirl lifted, and another man on horseback appeared, then instantly disappeared, and Bill was back at Eck's side, calling the dogs as tho he had always been a sheep herder.

It was well that the sheep, scenting a storm, had come so near the cliff, or Eck might have never got them back, with all the help given by Bill and the dogs, tho the former showed signs of skipping at times; but fear of braving the storm, as well as some other motive, held him. Having been caught, he had been told that the best policy in this case was not to run away.

For over an hour they fought against darkness and wind-driven snow to get the sheep to shelter. Sometimes Eck had to go ahead and tramp a way. Finally, in a lull of the wind and the lifting for a few seconds of the snow, something dark loomed ahead—the ledge under which they would drive the sheep. Exhausted, the great flock made for the shelter.

"They are safe, now, I am sure," suggested Eck, blowing the snow away from his face. "Put your horse in here with the mule," and he felt for the side of the little cove. "Now to get the direction of that wagon."

After some stumbling about and groping, followed by Bill, who was afraid to be left alone in such a blizzard as he never before had seen, Eck found the wagon, and soon had a lamp lighted and a fire burning in the little stove, behind which Bill dropped, wet and shaking.

As Eck cut the meat for supper, he asked: "Who was that with you, Bill?"

"Nobody," snapped Bill. "You merely imagined that, I tell you. I came over on horseback to visit Staley. Saw he was gone and a storm coming. Tried to get up the sheep myself and, new to that kind of work, got them turned wrong. Don't you go to saying anything but that!"

CHAPTER XI.

A NIGHT WITH BILL.

BILL refused to eat with Eck. He looked so tired that the latter finally told him to hang up his wet clothing

Rheumatism

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about the fire, and to crawl into Staley's comfortable bunk. Somehow Eck could not but feel some pity for the boy. Perhaps he had not only been born of bad people, but had been badly raised. In that case he was not altogether to blame.

As Bill lay down and covered himself up, he asked: "What are you going to do about it, anyway? Didn't I help you get in the sheep?"

"Sure you did, Bill. I'm not going to do anything. I'm only going to tell it as it was. Was it your uncle who sent you, or were you and Pluggy trying to get the start of a sheep ranch of your own? Up here they have been known to hang sheep thieves. Better make yourself scarce after this."

"You'd better not let my uncle know you've put that on me. He is a dangerous man. I told you once there was nobody with me."

"I must have dreamed a voice then, and seen visions," insisted Eck.

Bill made him no answer. Presently Eck began in a kinder tone:

"Bill, don't you know there's nothing made in stealing—small or great? Always and forever in the long run you get the worst of it and come out the little end of the horn."

"Take that preaching out of my sight," demanded Bill.

"Is that preaching, Bill? I thought I was giving you a scientific bit of advice. If you keep on you'll get caught yet, and they'll take an inventory of your brain, and say it isn't a good one. You are not smart at all. Can't help doing what you are doing. Sort of an imbecile, or simple, as we call them at home. Your brain stopped developing when you were about say, 10 years old. Want them to say that about you? Be wise, Bill. Reform, and show people you've got a good brain—that you are a man, and not a candidate for a feebleminded home."

Bill set his squinty eyes on Eck, surprise showing in them. "Doctor stuff this time, is it?" he sniffed. "'Bout as much truth in it as in that other preachment. You think you got me cornered and can talk as you please. I'm not scared of you."

"Who's trying to scare you, Bill? I'm merely trying to tell you that you will never get rich off other people in your way of going at it. Honesty——"

"Honesty! Nothin'! Where's your sense gone? Ever hear of them big guns that steals millions in railroads, wheat, steel, everything, off people. Folks falls down and worships them. Had them fellows' brains stopped growin' at 10, say? It won't work."

"Worship? Nothing! I didn't say all criminals were partly imbecile, but most. As for the big kind that you mean, why, deep down who worships them? I would rather be in the place of the fellow who only steals a sheep than to be one of those big thieves who have taken the substance of the widow and orphan, and ruined men's business and——"

Eck stopped, for Bill had dropped over on the bunk and was pretending to snore. He had made up his mind that he would stay awake all night. He was not afraid of Bill Doty while he himself was awake, but what might not Bill do to him if he were sound asleep? He could not trust him in any way.

He settled himself for the night in an easy chair improvised for his own comfort by Staley. But the hard fight in the storm and the chill had left him in no position to remain long awake. He would doze off in spite of himself.

At last he hit upon a plan. A large sheep bell thrown in a corner gave him the idea. Bill was now sleeping the sleep of a Rip Van Winkle. Eck tied a string to the bell at one end and the other end around Bill's ankle protruding over the end of the bunk; then he hung the bell over the back of his own chair. The sleeper could not move without ringing the bell so close to the other's head, and this would waken Eck.

And it did. Bill would rouse and turn, then turn and rouse, and yet never realize that he was jangling a bell, while each sound would awaken Eck, who would replenish the fire and take note of the storm, and then go back to sleep again.

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It was bright daylight when the bell last awoke him. He untied it, then laughed when Bill wondered how in the dickens he had got his foot wound up in the string.

The wind had moderated, and Eck saw how it had completely blown the snow off from the grass and left good picking for the sheep, already stirring out. Staley was not to be seen about, and after drinking some coffee Bill silently took his leave.

There was no way but for Eck to leave flock No. 12 to its own devices and the care of the dogs and go back to his own flock. He pulled the mule out from its rock shelter and saddled it, then made his way by a circuitous route about drifts until his own camp came in sight. Here he found everything in good shape and the dogs on guard, altho they nearly knocked him over in their delight that he had come.

He expected some one from the house, were it possible to get out, to see if all was well at the camps, and about noon the old camp tender came riding in.

"I'll tell you what you need out here, Mr. McDonegal," was Eck's first greeting to the old man. "You want telephone wires."

"Ah, now, lad, do we?" asked McDonegal. "Now, mebbe we do be behind the times, but they be na howlin' success where they have tried them, wi' the wind blowin' them ta Jericho. First swirl o' tha storrum' and they're doon."

"Anyway, you could find out if the herders were fixing to get the sheep in out of the storm before it had a chance to twist up any wires. They could have their orders to telephone in before they started, and if no telephone came, wouldn't you guess something was wrong"

"Weel, not always in this country, lad," and McDonegal smiled. His smile faded as Eck quickly told his story.

"Pluggy, was it?" he commented slowly. "Ah, I see noo! Pluggy, thot halfbreed Stephens keeps at his most outlyin' drove. Tha one nearest the gap inta oor ain lands. I see it all! They knew the flock was alone an' unguarded. They'd a' ran it inta tha gap, an' there let some stay behind for tha wolves ta devour, an' some they'd driven over tha rocks, an' tha number they felt thay darst pit in wi' their own sheep would 'a' been driven inta Pluggy's herd."

"Why wouldn't they have taken all?" asked Eck.

"Ah, chiel, do ye no understan'? Ta hae taken all would ha' coorted investigation. Tha must be bones left picked by tha wolves, an' signs that others ha' fallen doon crevices in tha rocks, an' been covered wi' snow. It has been hinted o' sick-like doin's o' Pluggy's in other storrums. I wull see after tha maister o' that copper mug."

Staley was in full possession of Camp No. 12 when McDonegal rode up to it. He knew some one had occupied his wagon the past night. He wore a hangdog expression, and a yet worse one before McDonegal was thru with him. Then he set in to begging back his job.

"We may try you a wee while with a drove nearer the house, an' send a mair trusty mon out here. It all depends on what Charley says to it, but here ye abide na mair," McDonegal gruffly assured him.

When Charley and McDonegal visited the Stephens ranch they found neither Pluggy nor Bill Doty. The owner, a short, crafty-eyed blusterer, came out at Charley's bidding, and listened with an air of bravado to the statements, coupled with threats, thrust down his teeth.

"That boy," he then shouted, "is no relative of mine! Just because his name was Stephens he comes up here claiming to be the son of one of my brothers back in Iowa. I sent him about his business three days ago, and as for that half-breed, Pluggy, he went away a day before that to see his sick mother, who lives up on the mesa. Your herder never saw Pluggy that night."

"Our herder saw what he saw, Stephens," broke in McDonegal, "an' no use yer denyin' thot lad, fur he hes yer mug. One o' yer ain childer, hev ye ony, could look na mair like ye."

"The lines are drawing closely about you and this gang of half-breeds you've gathered from somewhere, Stephens," and Charley pointed a warning finger straight into the ugly face. "This little incident will help push in the line. We know that your nephew came straight to No. 12 sheep wagon, and straight from your house that day. He went with Staley to that den, and when, by his help, he saw Staley was full of booze, he pretended to be taking him home. Instead, he hid him away in a sheltered spot, and came on to meet Pluggy, who is known to have been on your grounds that very day. Some day soon evidence will slip in on you, and then—well, ask Pluggy. He knows what they do sometimes up here to such as you."

With this he turned the head of his horse and rode away, followed by McDonegal.

That evening McDonegal appeared at Eck's wagon.

"Here," he called, thrusting in his head and one hand. "Charley sent ye a wee bit o' a gun to stave off that young limb o' perdition should he come botherin' again aroun' ye. Keep it handy by ye."

Eck smiled. He felt slightly nervous over the close proximity of Pluggy, big and ferocious-looking, but little Bill Doty—never over him!

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this interesting story. You will miss a great treat if you do not read it to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

* * *

Five Languages.

There had been a fatal accident at the railroad crossing in a town in Iowa, and the coroner, a pompous old chap, who magnified both his office and its incumbent, had impaneled a jury for the inquest.

There was only one witness of the accident, an illiterate Slav laborer, who could understand no English. With him the coroner began to struggle.

"Can you speak English?" he asked.

The man shook his head.

"Can you speak German?"

Again the man shook his head.

"Can you speak Italian?"

The same response.

"Can you speak Russian? Can you speak Swedish?" were the next questions, to both of which the man signified in the negative.

"It's no use, gentlemen," said the coroner, turning to the jury. "We can't proceed with the case. I've spoken to this man in five different languages and can't make him understand me."

* * *

Block System.

He was traveling on a branch railroad in the North. After a series of sudden bumps and unexpected stops he became uneasy.

"Look here," he said to the porter, "is this train safe?"

"It sure am," said the porter.

"Well, have they a block system on this road?"

"Block system, sah. We hab de greatest block system in de world. Ten miles back we were blocked by a load of hay, six miles back we were blocked by a mule, just now we were blocked by a cow, and I reckon when we get further souf we'll be blocked by an alligator. Block system, boss? Well, Ah should smile!"

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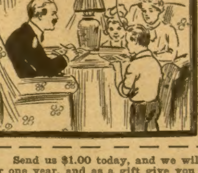
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Lemon Drops

Not a Gift.

Mr. MacIsaacs takes the greatest pride and pleasure in his garden, where grow all kinds of fruit and vegetables.

On the birthday of Solomon, his only son, MacIsaacs thought to give the lad a treat.

"Solly, my boy," he said, with a kindly smile, "you vos haf my permission to ask all your leetle friends into der garden, and dey can take anydings except der strawberries."

In an hour or two the garden seemed to be overflowing with small boys, and MacIsaacs took a stroll thru the wandering gangs.

Almost at once he came across a lad whose hands were full of the prized strawberries and whose face bore suspicious stains.

"My tear boy," remonstrated MacIsaacs, "you must nod dake der strawberries."

"Vy not?" retorted the lad promptly. "I haf paid my penny."

❧

Had Been Young Himself.

Jones was a kind-hearted butcher. One day he was going home with a block of ice in his cart, but being called to dinner he left it in his shop.

On coming into the shop after dinner he was surprised to see a small boy sitting on the ice.

"Get off! You will be frozen," roared Jones.

The boy did not get off, so Jones shouted at him a second time.

"Have you ever been a boy?" was the pitiful answer.

"Why, yes," said Jones.

"Did you ever have a father?"

"Yes," returned Jones.

"Did your father have a strap?" asked the boy.

Then the light of understanding came to Jones, so he replied, softly:

"Stay there, my lad, stay there."

❧

Worse Than Hard.

Shamus O'Callaghan sat at the door of his cottage, his head bowed in his hands, and sobbing with emotion. His friend Terence O'Halloran chanced to pass.

"Arrah, ye're looking very sad the day," he said, laying a sympathetic hand on the mournful one's shoulder.

"Ah, and it's feeling very sad I am," responded Shamus. "Oi've lost me mother-in-law."

"Lost your mother-in-law?" said the surprised Terence.

"Ay," replied Shamus. "Oi tell ye it's very hard to lose your mother-in-law."

"Hard!" exclaimed Terence. "Begorra, me bhoy, it's almost impossible!"

❧

His Translation.

When Mr. Smith—your intimate friend Smith—awoke the other morning he was greeted by his wife with this:

"My sweet boy, do you know you came home late last night and that you talked in your sleep?"

"Great Scott! No, did I?" said Smith, badly agitated. "What did I say? Tell me."

"I just couldn't make it all out, but it ended like ante-up-jackpot stake."

"Oh, yes, yes, my dear, I was reciting a little Esperanto that a friend was teaching me. I intended to tell it to you when I came home. It means 'How is my darling girl tonight?'"

❧

Wanted It Changed.

"I want yer to take a picture of our Joe here," said the fond parent to the country photographer.

Joseph was requested to stand in a certain attitude and look toward the photographer. That gentleman's specialty was quick developing, and in a short space of time a proof was placed in the mother's hand. She looked at it very uneasily for some time, and then remarked:

"I seen a notice in the window there to say you can do photos to customer's desire, so I'd be obliged to yer if you could put another face on Joe. You see, it's to be sent with an advertisement which said they 'wanted a boy, smart-looking and honest.'"

❧

A Tactless Messenger.

After the dynamite fatality Casey ran back to break the news to Mrs. Murphy.

"Have you got Pat's life insured?" he asked.

"Indeed I have and for a long while," was the reply.

"Well, then," blurted out the tactful messenger, "I hope ye won't have the trouble collecting it that the boys will in collecting Pat."

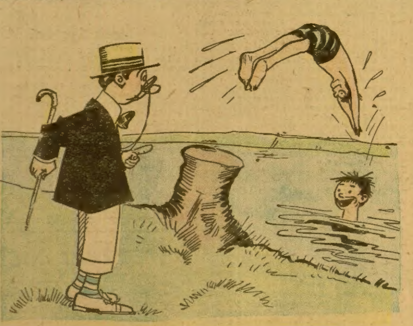
❧

Probably Not.

"Well, I see where another couple got married on a dare."

"They are sure to be unhappy."

"I don't know about that. I don't believe people who marry on a dare expect much of each other."



Bystander—"How's the water, boy?"
Boy—"Fine."
Bystander—"But shouldn't you be at school?"
Boy—"Course. That's what makes it fine."

No Sense in It.

"I don't see any sense in this old joke about women shopping all day and not spending a cent," scoffed the bachelor.

"Of course you don't," said the married man sadly. "There isn't any sense in it, because it's a lie. I've been married ten years, and I've got receipted bills to prove what I say."

❧

Strikes Him as Funny.

"Do you believe a penny saved is a penny earned?"

"Indeed I do," replied the eminent capitalist, "for that's how I got my start in life, but there is hardly any observation I can make that amuses my son any more than that good old maxim."

❧

Easy Way.

"Since the war, we have had no chance for getting our favorite brand of champagne from France."

"Why don't you do as we do? We get all our imported wine now from California."

❧

A Kindly Warning.

"What do you think? Jerry is to have rabbits' eyes grafted on his own injured ones to see with."

"Then let me warn you in time. Rabbits love cabbage heads, so keep out of his sight."

❧

Little Eva.

"Why did you get rid of little Eva? She could act."

"She could act, but her daughter couldn't. And she insisted that we give her daughter an ingenue part."

❧

Crossing the Stream.

"Sandy" Macleod and his donkey were well known in the country which gave them birth, and the two were on very friendly terms. "Sandy" would not have exchanged his "cuddy" for the best thorobred in the land.

Going out for a ride one day recently, he resolved to make his "moke" jump a stream. He applied the whip and the animal galloped to the edge of the bank and then stopped so suddenly that "Sandy" was thrown to the other side of the water.

When he had sufficiently recovered from the shock he rose and looked the donkey in the face.

"Verra weel pitched," he said, "but hoo are ye gaun tae get ower yersel'?"

❧

In a Maze.

"Your honor," said the lawyer who was pleading his case lengthily and with many involved arguments, "do you follow me?"

"I have so far," returned the judge, wearily, "but I'll say frankly that if I thought I could find my way back I'd quit right here."

❧

Dangerous.

Wife—"Mercy! What's the matter with your face? You look as tho you'd been in a battle."

Hub—"I was getting shaved by a lady barber when a mouse ran across the floor."

Accepting His Apology.

"Fore!"

Just a moment too late the golfer gave warning. The ball had struck the shabby wayfarer who was passing by the golf course, and rendered him unconscious for a few moments.

When he recovered he found the culprit bending anxiously over him and apologizing. Moreover, in his solid palm there nestled much money.

"Thankee, sir!" he said wheezily, as his gloating eyes lingered on the compensation. "And when will ye be playing again, sir?"

❧

Misanthropic.

"When Bliggins is happy he tries to sing."

"Yes. Some of us don't care how miserable we make others, so long as we're comfortable."

❧

A Warning.

"Can you tell me, my good man, if they take in summer boarders at the farmhouse yonder?"

"Yep, unless the summer boarders are smarter than the farm folks are."

❧

Atmosphere.

"I wonder if this olive oil ever saw Italy."

"What's the diff? The label is printed in Italian."

No Difficulty.

The fat and forty old lady had plied the tram conductor with so many questions that he was beginning to think that mother-in-law jokes had substantial foundation in fact.

"Can you tell me on what cars I can use these transfer tickets? They mix me up somewhat."

The conductor winked at another passenger, and replied:

"It's really very simple, madam. East of the junction by a west-bound car an exchange from an east-bound car is good only if the west-bound car is west of the junction formed by the said east-bound car. South of the junction formed by a north-bound car an exchange from a south-bound car is good south of the junction if the north-bound car was north of the junction at the time of issue, but only south of the junction going south if the south-bound car was going north at the time it was south of the junction. No difficulty at all, ma'am."

By this time the old lady was speechless.

❧

Getting Even.

If old Garge Jones was the most inquisitive man in the village, Tom Morton was certainly the surliest.

One afternoon, as Garge perambulated slowly along the one narrow street, he paused at Tom's garden fence and gazed inquiringly over it at Tom, who was busily nailing a very large box together

"Afternoon, Tom," said the old chap, genially. "Whatever be 'ee puttin' that great box together for?"

Tom paused in his hammering long enough to retort curtly:

"To hold all your questions, if so be as it's big enough."

Garge eyed him in pained silence for a few moments. Then he took an empty match box from his pocket and threw it over to Tom.

"Then that'll do for yer civil answers, if so be as it's small enough," he retorted, quietly.

❧

Not a Pleasant Prospect.

The Judge—"My boy, you will have to choose between living with your father and mother."

The Boy—"Have I got to live with either of them?"—Puck.

❧

Attraction Vanishes.

He—"You used to say there was something about me you liked."

She—"Yes, but you've spent it all now."

❧

Tired of It.

"Don't you enjoy her repartee?"
"Well, I've heard her repertoire."

To Prevent Old Age Coming too Soon!

"Toxic poisons in the blood are thrown out by the kidneys. The kidneys act as filters for such products. If we wish to prevent old age coming too soon and increase our chances for a long life, we should drink plenty of pure water and take a little 'Anuric,'" says the famous Dr. Pierce of Buffalo, N. Y.

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Down With His Ship.

(Continued From Page 9.)

"Right opposite that uplift of rock I've mentioned before."

"You are sure the wind was astern?"

"Absolutely sure."

"Only a beam wind could take her out of her course?"

"Suppose the wheel was put over and lashed?"

"Water-filled as she was, she wouldn't answer her helm without a man at the wheel."

"Then she must inevitably have driven on into the point of the V ledges?"

"Yes."

"What kind of a man was Cyrus Brayden?"

"As capable a sailor as ever I saw—quick, alert, full of resources and master of his trade. He was one of the men of the second boat—the one that never was reported."

"Was he an honest man?"

Hardy looked hard at this persistent questioner. In a way the subject was distasteful to him, for he was not prepared to confess that he had deserted his ship while men remained aboard, but, on the other hand, he found relief in talking the matter over with this agreeable young diver. He was not absolutely sure what Roger was aiming at, but the questions were casting color upon ideas that had been developing in his own mind since the late vain search.

"I never knew Brayden to misappropriate a cent," he returned.

"You say you had a fever. What was it like? Did you have to be carried to the boat?"

"Oh, no! My strength was all right, but my body was filled with heat and pains, and my head was mighty bad."

"Did you personally see the wound in the hull that sunk the Brave?"

"No. Brayden saw to that."

"What proof can you give that the Brave was really sinking?"

Roger plumped this question out incisively, and the captain started a little, but he did not seem so much surprised, after all.

"Is it not suggestive," the diver added, "that Brayden and the Brave disappeared at the same time?"

He was eying his companion sharply, and the worried look on the older man's face was impressive. Hardy moved uneasily.

"I see what you mean," he answered slowly, "and you touch thoughts that have been much in my head since we failed to find the Brave. Sir, I was a figure-head, a clod, in that time of wreck. My head was a mere puffball. The fever had taken my wits away, and I went thru it all like a child's toy doing its little act at acrobatics."

"You say the fever was an odd one——"

"Very odd. We had not been in any locality where fevers prevailed, and tho I am something of a sea doctor, I failed to diagnose the particular sort of fever I had. It was not malarial, nor yellow, nor typhoid, nor typhus, nor anything else familiar to me."

"Captain, has it ever occurred to you that you were victim of a plot, that you were drugged before the real trouble began, that the Brave never ran upon a submerged rock and that Brayden stole the ship and took her away, sound as a dollar?"

Hardy brought his fist down heavily upon the table.

"Just what I've been wondering this afternoon, tho it never entered my head before."

The interview was continued somewhat longer, and, tho the shipmaster could not bring himself to admit that he had left the Brave while other men remained there, he and Roger went deep into the heart of other possibilities. What was the mystery of the Riding Brave?

Night fell with the brigantine a place of quiet. It was not known whether the White Creeper was still on the east side of the farther reef, but no natives had been seen near at hand, and it was hoped they had no evil intentions.

Despite this fact, Hardy stationed an unusual number of men for an anchor-watch, with orders to keep alert lookout until day came. The few small arms, together with belaying pins and the like, were ready at hand, and if a hostile boat tried to board them they intended to give the enemy a worrisome reception.

When all was done the captain went to his stateroom. Entering, he made a light, and the first thing he saw was the weights he had brought to attach to his feet and take himself down to death alongside the Riding Brave. He stood still and stared at them fixedly.

The day had brought important changes. He still believed that it was the duty of a shipmaster to be the last away in time of wreck, and, if all hands could not be saved, to go down with his ship, but now he had to deal with unforeseen conditions.

If the Brave could not be found, was he under any compulsion to sink himself in the sea just for mere sentiment? His decision was negative, and the kicked the nearer weight lightly. Unless another day's search developed the wreck, the weights were superfluous.

"I'll live!" he muttered, sighing in relief. "I must, for I'm needed. When the brigantine fetches to port Hagar will require my health. I'm not a bit anxious to commit suicide, anyhow, and I can't do it with that poor child in distress. I'll care for her, and make her the companion of my dear Persis!"

Then his thoughts took a new turn.

"The Brave was not lost. Cooper was right, I had no fever, but I was drugged, tricked and betrayed. Brayden stole my ship. He kept half my men aboard, and sailed away with the valuable cargo. Everybody was in the plot but me. I remember, now, that the sailors who went with me in the first boat disappeared oddly soon after we made San Francisco. All hands in the plot against me. What was that?"

He had heard an unusual sound on deck, but as no alarm followed he passed the matter by lightly, but there was one aboard who did not take it that way.

Roger had been pacing the waist slowly, his head bent and his mind very busy, when he had a surprise. A soft scraping, a few feet away, was followed by the appearance of a strange man who dropped from the bulwark to the deck. The diver stared in wonder.

"Hello," he exclaimed. "Who the dickens are you?"

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* * *

Ex-Owners.

"The next time we buy a place," said Bangwhopper, "we want it stipulated in the contract that the owner from whom we buy is to embark for Zanzibar immediately, there to remain an exile as long as the place is in our possession.

"Now Dubfer sold us a house and lot, and then said that as he lived next door he would gladly share our labors incident to taking care of it.

"He helped us take care of it all right. It was easy for him. The first thing he did was to trim a tree in our yard which obstructed his view of what was going on at our house. When the fruit ripened he gathered it for us, giving us part of it and saving some for himself. Possibly he divided it impartially. Perhaps not. We don't know.

"One day when we came home from church we found old man Dubfer and Mrs. Dubfer, the married son and the divorced daughter, the married son's wife, the married son's children and the divorced daughter's children, all up in our apricot tree.

"They all had baskets. They used to own the place, and he was helping us take care of it, you see. Those were the terms of the treaty which we felt that we had to observe.

"They took so much pride in their ex-property that we couldn't do a thing without their consent. If we planted a bush they found fault with it and uprooted it. We finally dug up everything on the place and changed things around to make it as unfamiliar to them as possible, and then we persuaded the other people in the neighborhood to go and tell the Dubfers how wonderfully the Bangwhopper family had been improving the place.

"Instantly the Dubfers went up in the air. They were surprised and shocked. They said that the place used to be lovely when they had it, but that we had ruined it. We didn't care whether we ruined it or not, provided we could make it entirely our own. The only things we left standing were the fruit trees, and they are still subject to the Dubfers' claims. They still take care of our fruit trees, especially when the fruit is mature and tempting.

"There is never a Sunday that the Dubfers don't bring down a delegation to our place to show them the trees they planted and husbanded. They invariably tell their friends how pleasant to the eye everything was before we got to meddling with things.

"Dubfer has told us so often what a wonderful horticulturist he is and what poor ones we are, that we have come to believe it in a superstitious sort of way, and are afraid to offend Dubfer for fear the trees will be blighted. If we had only had it stipulated in the contract that he must depart for Mafeking for all time as soon as we took possession, then we could have ruined things as we wanted to without fear of incurring criticism and the customary 'I told you so.' "

* * *

Paradoxical Condition.

"What is that guest fussing with the hotel clerk about?"

"I believe he is sour on his suite."

Serpent and Dove.

(Continued From Page 7.)

was aquiver. And in his chair, with a hue like that of death in every lineament, lay Morgan Dalray, pulseless, white, motionless.

Horror seemed to root Lucille to the spot, nor did she stir till a voice sounded on her ear.

"Go!" it thundered like the knell of doom. "Take with you your poor blind tool, the murderess by yon chair!"

It was the voice of Nicholas Burke.

This remarkable story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

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Drink often brings a man so low that he can't raise the price of a drink.

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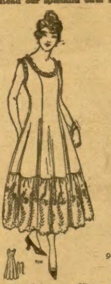

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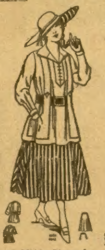

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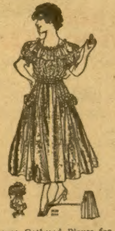

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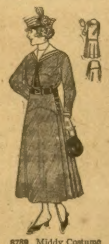

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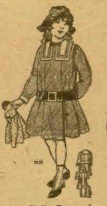

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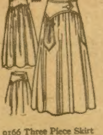

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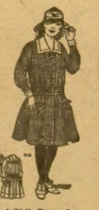

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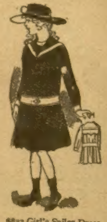

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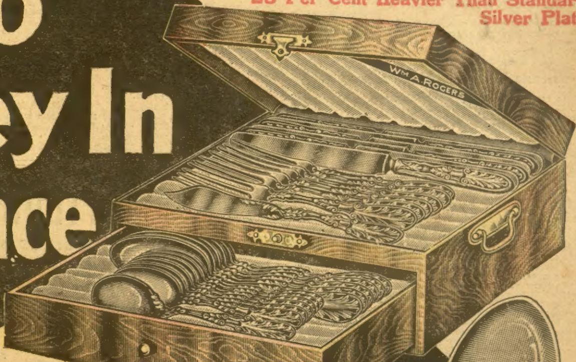

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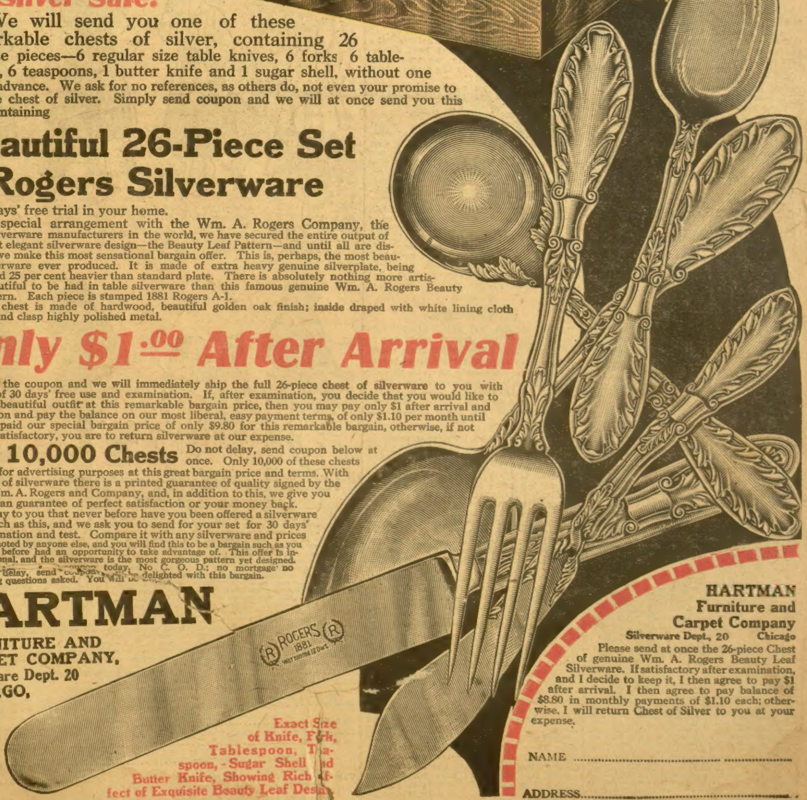

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